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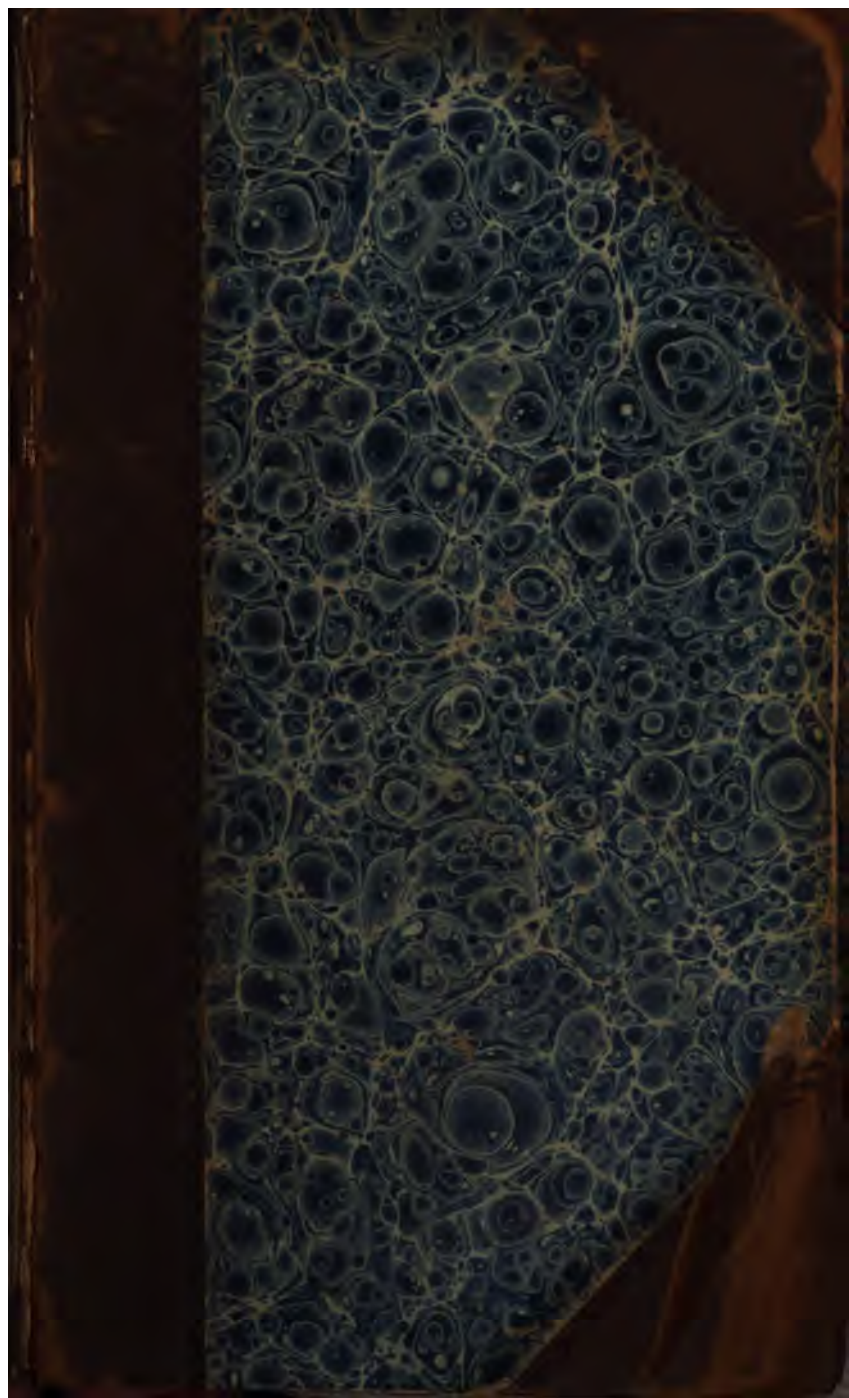
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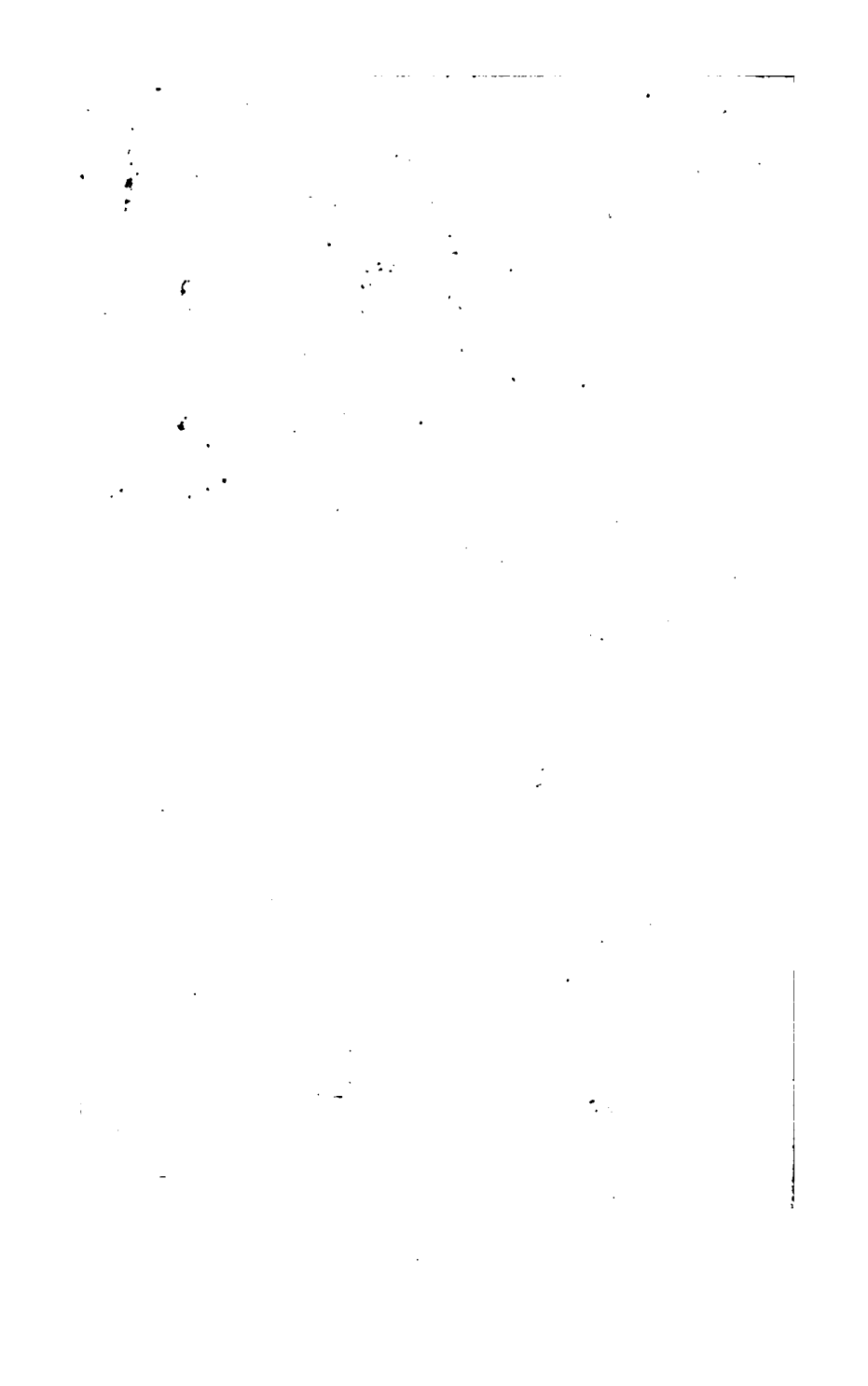
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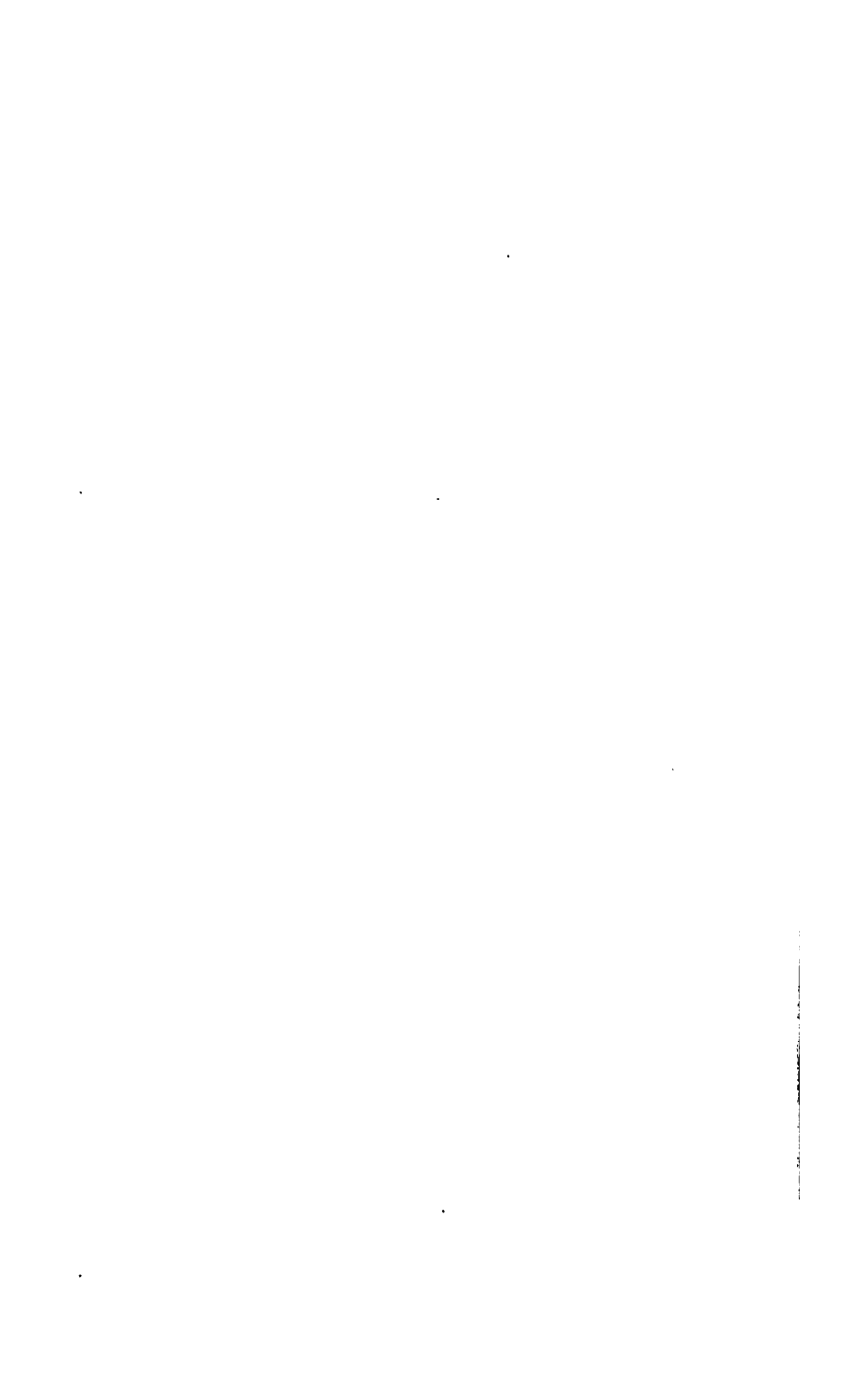
THE
JOYS OF HEAVEN.

BY A LAYMAN.

“The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of
righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”—ISAIAH xxxii. 17.

LONDON :
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.
1840.

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which has been drawn consistent, at the same time that nothing has been stated—the whole subject being considered—which ought to wound the very finest sensibilities of humanity.

Although the literary merit of the work may not be commensurate with the vastness of the matters discussed, or to which allusion is made—and fall short of what the public in such a publication might desire; yet the very grandeur of the general theme may go far to palliate minor imperfections—if not to excuse absolute defects.

Regarded under this latter aspect, and coupling therewith the circumstance of the treatise appearing under such influential—not to say flattering auspices and high authority—the Author would even hope that at some future day an enlarged edition may be called for.

Should it be his good fortune to be so noticed, his assiduous endeavour will be to cull further beauties from the only source whence perennial blossoms are to be gathered—to give to them all the sublimity and force to which his humble powers are adequate—and in all respects to make the volume more generally attractive, and

consequently worthier of such distinguished patronage.

That your Majesty may be favoured with uninterrupted health and prosperity in this world, and so continue to be an ornament to your sex, and to the illustrious circle amid which you move ; and that hereafter you may attain to those Immortal Joys which have herein been feebly and imperfectly described ; is the devout prayer of

Your Majesty's

Most obedient and humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

London, Jan. 24, 1840.

LETTER FROM MR. DALE.

The Author having requested the Reverend the Vicar of St. Bride's to express an opinion of the volume prior to its circulation, that gentleman has kindly returned the following answer :—

SIR,—I have availed myself of the earliest leisure moments at my disposal to read your Treatise on “The Joys of Heaven,”—not, indeed, with as much attention as I could wish, but with sufficient to direct me in forming a judgment of the work. You seem to have compared with much diligence, and connected with much skill, the intimations which are scattered throughout Scripture on this most interesting and important subject; and without making myself responsible for the correctness of every sentiment, still less the accuracy of every expression, I think that, as a whole, the Book displays a power of thought which will recommend it to the few who reason,

and a felicity of illustration which will make it attractive to the many who feel. I have no title, and I am sure no disposition, to place myself in the attitude of one whose moral 'imprimatur' shall influence the public mind; but, as I have had no concern in recommending the publication of the work, I do not hesitate to characterise it, now that it *is* published, as likely to be read by many with interest, and by none without improvement. It suggests much material for reflection, and reflection on such a subject can never be unprofitable.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient and faithful Servant,
THOMAS DALE.

65, *Lincoln's Inn Fields*,
Jan. 20, 1840.

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THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

CHAPTER I.

AMID all the investigations which have occupied the minds of men, assuredly there are none of such paramount interest or importance, as those which have reference to the beatitude of heaven. To ascertain the *summum bonum* of earthly enjoyment has been the supreme object of solicitude among all nations, and in every age. But in how much higher estimation ought that inquiry to be held, which relates to a state of being destined to outlive this fleeting world, all its concerns, and all its enjoyments! Upon such a theme well may every one love to ponder, seeing that its contemplation is not limited to questions of perpetual change, finite existence, or restricted duration; but, reaching beyond those contracted limits, professes to grapple with consi-

derations, yielding the assurance of certain felicity, never-ending rest, and infinite perfection. The very contemplation of such exalted happiness, when propounded by the light of reason alone, presents to the understanding an enduring substance and gladdening hope, such as is furnished by no other topic. How much more ought such to be the case, when the full meridian blaze of revelation has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel? Connected with every mundane subject, there is a perpetual discordance, transient satisfaction, or evasion of our grasp, which, as far as essentials are concerned, belong not to any celestial question. However much of loftiness, or of comparative incomprehensibility, may commingle with these latter topics, assuredly the brightness of divine inspiration has for ever dispelled all antecedent gloom and uncertainty.

True it is, that we know not the degree, nor perhaps in some measure the kind, of enjoyment, which will engage the attention of those happy spirits who may be thought worthy to participate in such ineffable and inconceivable delights. But that which may be termed a negative perception, has been graciously vouchsafed to the humblest of the human race, and that, too, in an ample and unqualified manner. In the same volume where it is recorded, "that eye hath not seen nor ear

heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ;" it is also written, " And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ;"—assurances, one and all, calculated to allay every possible mistrust which the weakest of mankind could conceive, as well as to satisfy every reasonable expectation, which the most gifted of the species could desire.

In this world, not only are life's joys fleeting and unsatisfactory at the best, but pain, sorrow, and tears are interwoven with the whole tissue of man's existence. Yet it will not be so for ever. In the mansions of the blessed, the causes for all these things will be eternally removed. Although it be indisputably and strictly true, that what is finite cannot comprehend what is infinite ; yet of the withdrawal of pain, of the abrogation of sorrow, and the wiping away of all tears from all eyes ; man as the object of those visitations and calamities, would seem to be in a condition peculiarly favourable to their unequivocal and perfect understanding. Grief and misery have been his invariable associates in this world, and therefore the knowledge of their removal comes to him with commanding force, admirable adaptation,

and clearly-defined attractiveness. It may be, and most probably is the case, that this negative perception of heaven's joys may occupy a very inferior place to that of those which are unrevealed; yet, taken in connexion with the all-pervading principles of the divine law, as they are revealed in scripture, it forms an unspeakable body of comfort and delight. Of the full development or infinite extent of those principles — although in a restricted sense this portion of the subject be the least unintelligible to man—it must be admitted his limited capacity is wholly inadequate to judge. However much he may feel disposed to admire the shadowing forth of such transcendent loveliness; in this world he will never be able to estimate their full value or wondrous extent. Perfect justice, perfect holiness, and perfect love, are as much beyond his dull apprehension as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is true, that, owing to the intelligence communicated to a Newton and others, we have obtained a far higher insight into the frame-work of the visible heavens than could have been anticipated; but, after all, to what does our knowledge of those luminous spheres amount, when their amazing extent is considered, and the omnipotence deducible therefrom is duly weighed? And although the light and immortality brought

to light by the gospel of Jesus Christ is of a much higher character, and far more specifically portrayed than the knowledge of this or any other subject before or since communicated to man ; yet the poverty of the human intellect, and its total inability to grasp so stupendous a theme, must ever form an utter obstruction to its appreciating, in all their excellency and entireness, the exalted virtues therein set forth with so much consistency and precision.

The truth is, that the bulk of mankind are so pre-occupied with the things of time and sense, that they have neither the requisite opportunity nor the inclination to investigate these matters, all important as they are, with that seriousness and concern which they unquestionably merit. The sacred volume, replete as it is with the soundest morality and wisdom, even in a comparatively worldly sense, is seldom or ever consulted. And as to that glory which is to be revealed when everything below shall have become as a dream when one awaketh, few indeed are they who have formed any adequate conception thereof.—So unworthy, indistinct, and poor, and so utterly incompatible with the loftiness of thought such subjects ought to inspire, are the ideas too generally formed upon this latter topic ; that it is here intended to portray some of the most prominent features of that

exalted happiness, to combine therewith such well-founded observations and reflections as revelation or reason approve, and to endeavour to answer whatever opinions seem unsubstantiated by the one, or are irreconcilable with the other.

Let it not be understood that reason is placed in competition with revelation. In no case is it presumed to reason, where scripture is entirely silent; and in every instance where the latter has spoken out, there reason is only to be considered as an auxiliary. Quite convinced of this truth is the writer of the present essay, that however high the one may soar above the other, still reason is the handmaid, and but the handmaid, to revelation—the humble interpreter of the oracles of heaven, and as such is neither to be neglected, overrated, nor despised. If what is here advanced be borne out by scripture, it ought to approve itself to the consciences of all those who may honour the work with a perusal. Wherever there is the slightest doubt, each individual must exercise his own unbiassed judgment, and draw such conclusions as the importance of the subject demands. At least, some materials for thought may have been contributed; and however these may be disposed of, the writer can affirm, that they are the result of his honest convictions, and entertained in all sincerity.

As was briefly noticed, the reason why the apprehensions of the world in general, as to the joys of heaven, are so inadequate and circumscribed, is the hold which the present life has of their affections and imaginations; the great mass of mankind have never even approximated to a full understanding of the depth or force of that scripture which affirms, that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The affections of most men are all centered in and restricted to a world of sense and sin. Its empty honours, puerile advantages, trifling engagements, and unsatisfactory pleasures, though each and all daily proved to be naught but "vanity and vexation of spirit," with the most paradoxical infatuation still tempt thousands to their undoing. The siren strains of ambition not only overpower the still small voice of conscience, but also overbear the authoritative deductions of reason. A few revolving hours and a spot of earth invest themselves with an importance and value inexplicable but to the jaundiced eye of passion, seeing that they are utterly unworthy of man's immortal hopes, and incompatible with his professed convictions. Overshadowed by crumbling dynasties, and surrounded by moth-eaten honours, whole races pass away, as though no tombstones crowded around to mark the

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fleetness of man's destiny, or published to an incredulous world the instability of all earthly grandeur and renown.

Grossly ignorant of all that lies beyond the tomb, yet hourly reminded of the uncertainty of everything here below, man seeks not to secure an interest in the inheritance above, which even his very reason bids him to expect. Surrounded by darkness and by death, to him the offer of life, light, and immortality, would appear unattractive, since, although they have been tendered with all the frankness and assurance which Godhead could bestow, practically the promise is disbelieved, or the boon despised ! Although every requirement of the divine law has been vouchsafed to win man back to innocence and virtue, and the only Son of God has humbled himself that we might be exalted ; yet even his intercession has been disregarded, and his wondrous love unreturned !

How incredible must the unbelief be that can act with such reckless inconsideration under circumstances so favourable to its expulsion ! As an historical fact, it is not questioned that the great majority of professing Christians are disposed to give implicit credence to all that is narrated of the life, sufferings, and death of the Saviour of the world. Nay further, it is nothing ques-

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tioned, that some vague and ill-defined conceptions of the resurrection of that divine person, may also be entertained. But, after all, to what does this faith amount? Does it at all meet the merits of the case—or is it commensurate with the grandeur of the proposed object? Are they alive to the stupendous power and essential sovereignty displayed throughout the whole of the Saviour's ministry and sufferings on earth, or influenced by that fervent gratitude which an indisputable office of kindness effected by a contemporary, would have called forth? Alas, no! At best it is a cold, barren, heartless faith, equally without a determinate object, or a purposed end. As a matter of argument, possibly the individuals in question may even go the length of defending with warmth and energy the sublime doctrines connected with this subject from the aspersions of such as would assail them, and yet be without one tittle of that genuine and heartfelt conviction, which is alone of any value. If such a belief were other than worthless, then might those proud spirits who are reserved in chains unto the judgment of the great day, lay claim to merit, since we read that even "the devils believe and tremble." And shall man do nothing more?—If he really accredited the doctrines he professes to believe, most assuredly his conduct would exhibit

signs of anxiety and earnestness, such as are but too seldom observed among professing Christians. Conscious of his own weakness, and reminded by all external nature of the wisdom and omnipotence of an overruling Providence, it could not be that he should put from him a revelation professing to come from Him who formed the universe, unless he first stumbled at the very threshold, and altogether disbelieved the record God hath given of his Son. Nothing can more forcibly display the utter enmity interwoven with man's nature to all righteousness, and the love of his Maker, than this unconquerable aversion to approach the very vestibule of that sanctuary, which has been with so much undeserved condescension reared for his benefit.

Yes, disguise it as men may, wilful disbelief is the original source of all their deep ingratitude, and is alone explanatory of the astounding fact, that when salvation is offered, they do not embrace it with the most devout thankfulness. The terms upon which it has been offered, though as reasonable as lovely, when rightly understood, are so opposite to man's proud nature and carnal lusts, that he will not even allow the physician a short parley, lest his aversion to the medicine should be overcome, and the physician's impotency triumph. "This is the condemnation,"

saith the scripture, "that light is come into the world; and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." But for this proneness to evil, it were impossible that men should not be glad to peruse whatever professed to be a revelation from heaven, or that they should be otherwise than disposed to make the most anxious inquiries regarding it. At every other cost, they would sift the evidences in its favour, and recur to its pages with all the delight which so great a boon ought unquestionably to call forth. Satisfied by a thousand corroborative circumstances, that a great First Cause must necessarily exist; had a love of rectitude or truth animated man's bosom, such must evidently have been his emotions on receiving so glorious a gift—not those of apathy or neglect. But how inexcusable the disbelief and ingratitude of the bulk of mankind appear, when it is also considered, that as well as revelation professing to be from God, it has ever been received as such by the best and wisest of mankind; that the insight therein divulged of the construction of the human heart, its secret springs and most imperceptible movements, are all such as no mere mortal ever did or ever could have

promulgated ; and that its doctrines and internal evidences have the stamp of Deity indelibly and universally affixed thereon ! The portraiture of the heart of man, as given in the Bible, is such, that none but he who made it could so faithfully have drawn its character. The accuracy indeed of that description, of itself, ought to satisfy any reasonable inquirer as to that revelation's claims to our regard, seeing, that amid the thousands of volumes which each succeeding age has given to the world, there is only one which treats of man's immortality and his present degradation, in a way worthy of his assured belief.

Yet to all this have been added other and most important attestations ; namely, the fulfilment of the prophecies, the agreement of the scripture statements with the most advanced scientific inquiry, the suitableness of its doctrines to the moral wants of a largely gifted though depraved understanding, and by no means least though last, the perfect acquiescence which the unseared conscience yields to their truth. All these bespeak the divine origin of that record upon which Christians profess to rely, but which, looking at the inconsistency of their conduct, they would rather seem to undervalue, if not altogether to overlook. If more particular evidence, both of

the power and goodness of the framer of that divine record were required, the lives of the many patriarchs and saints who shed a lustre throughout its pages, and especially the history of the Saviour of the world in all its unexampled brightness and benignity, may well exhibit the same.

Most truly might the apostle exclaim to the Hebrews, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—and justly indeed have the Scriptures described the wickedness of the human heart. Not only is it deceitful to others, but treacherous towards itself and its own best interests. Full of pride, falsehood, and malignity, its innate predilection for those fell propensities so disqualifies it for accepting the offered amelioration, and so invincibly predisposes it to disbelieve everything that is incompatible with its present enjoyment, or rather its fancied enjoyment; that well might the same apostle upon another occasion exclaim, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

But let the attempt be made to trace this unbelief somewhat further. That it exists to a frightful extent, revelation and all experience fully prove, and that to its noxious suggestions are mainly to be referred man's practical rejection of the sacred volume have been noticed. What

then is the prevailing disposition of mind which leads to this unbelief?—Like that of man's arch-seducer, the devil, it is no other than pride. Not content with being superior in eminence to numbers, that great deceiver erewhile brought ruin on himself and all his prostrate host, through pride of heart and foul rebellion. A deceived heart turned him aside from the path of rectitude and of duty, as it has ever done all those who, tempted by him, have forsaken the ways of wisdom—whose ways alone are "pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Love of power and dominion so obscured the vision of the apostate angel, that, like as lust ever does, it conceived and brought forth sin, and then final ruin. Such has invariably been the history of pride. It is the fruitful germ from whence have shot up more mischiefs to the world, than from any other source. "From whence," writes the apostle, "come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts?" "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace; wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Nothing is more agreeable to the pride of human nature, than that amid the various specula-

tions which occupy the attention of mankind, some determinate knowledge should be come to. Yet when such knowledge has been attained, how apt are men to everlook the power which led them to right conclusions, and to speak and act as though their own superior judgment had been their director. To such a pitch has this proud presumptuous spirit been carried by certain individuals, and by whole sects, that they have determined to receive no doctrine as orthodox, which they cannot fully comprehend! That such impious daring of the majesty of Heaven should procure for its practisers any of its grace, it were unreasonable to expect. And although the pride and unbelief of the majority of mankind may not have led them to prescribe to themselves so presumptuous a principle of action, yet is it the same unyielding spirit which is the main barrier to all men's progression in truth and holiness. Did they but receive, as they ought to do, the doctrines of Christianity in a childlike disposition, and place implicit confidence in Him, who is their Father both by creation and adoption, how comparatively easy would be the work of reconciliation! But a proud and stubborn nature, and an evil heart of unbelief, cannot tolerate such docility; and therefore, we distrust Him, whom our best reason tells us it were wisdom to credit,

and disbelieve his word, although, were it listened to, conscience, assenting to its excellence, silently proclaims the advantage.

Accustomed to things visible, and habituated to inquire into matters accessible to the senses, man erroneously endeavours to understand those things which are invisible, after a similar fashion ; to compute them from a measure out of all manner of proportion. Although a scale has been furnished, by which, in some degree, the unseen world may be surveyed ; such is the perverse disposition of him, who is most interested in the question, that he rather chooses to adopt one utterly false and inapplicable, because he is better acquainted with it. He has been accustomed, by what he presumptuously calls his own efforts, to make the attempt partially to understand the things of this world, and without having one iota of the requisites for comprehending those of any other ; he as madly, as unbelievably, puts from him that record which alone treats of topics most worthy of his regard.

Limited, indeed, are the number who have even a tolerable idea of a state of being, where naught but love and purity prevails. The same insensibility which leads men to overlook or forget their lost and undone condition, is the cause also of their not elevating their minds to those tran-

scendent scenes of loveliness, where sin and sorrow cannot enter—scenes alone worthy of an immortal spirit's regard, and the expectation of which can alone furnish any assured and solid consolation.

Although a celebrated poet has described the poor Indian as seeing God in clouds and hearing him in the wind, it is to be feared that too many professing Christians have pictured to themselves, and—what is more—are satisfied with—a far humbler heaven. The notions too many have formed of that blessed region, of which it is here intended to offer a few remarks, far from having been founded upon any of those ennobling and exalted aspirations which the subject ought to inspire, have each and all been gathered from a degenerate world. They have been modelled after the pattern of things temporal ; and, as such, are, and ever must be, in direct opposition to the things of heaven, contrary to his will who has declared, that “ my ways are not as your ways, nor my thoughts as your thoughts,” and fundamentally and altogether erroneous and unscriptural. Every speculation which recognises in those unfading joys which the righteous are taught to look forward to, no higher beauty or nobler sentiment than is familiar to the occupants of earth, is clearly in contravention of the declarations of

teresting topic ; namely, to what extent the recollections of this world may be expected to accompany us into the world to come. For the present, we shall proceed with that part of the subject upon which there can be no doubt whatever, as respects essentials, although many of its features may not have been contemplated to the extent they deserved, or comprehensively surveyed in all their interesting details.

CHAPTER II.

IT was observed, at the outset, that if we had not any specific or minute information as to the glories of heaven, beyond the immutable principles which would there become triumphant, at least we had a negative assurance of such glory in the circumstance of the total exclusion of all evil, pain, and uncertainty ; in itself a most glorious announcement, and one worthy of the giver. But besides our knowing that all evil, and everything that harmonises not with the attributes and perfections of Him who reigneth, will for ever be excluded from the precincts of heaven ; and our being made acquainted with the statutes which have been “ made and provided,” to use the nomenclature of earthly courts, for the general weal ; the term of years for which the covenant entered into is binding, the very character, peculiarities, and personal history of many of the

inhabitants, and the charter upon which the whole investiture reposes, have each and all been published. Above all, no one who is not wilfully ignorant can fail to know, that he who reigns is infinite in perfection, and has chosen to designate himself by the emphatic, endearing, and embodied name of Love—the same name which has been stamped upon universal nature, which is re-echoed in every individual's conscience, and which is amply evidenced in the testamentary deed, with an authenticated copy of which every man is furnished in the word of God.

We are not acquainted, it is true, with the precise period of time when the glories of heaven shall commence, neither has the spot been mapped out wherein the site of the New Jerusalem is to be found. Not men alone, but angels, we are told, are ignorant of the former ; the Father himself having thought fit to reserve the knowledge of that event exclusively to himself.

As to the locality ; what need of anxiety upon this or any similar circumstance, seeing that He who has confined the knowledge of the one event to himself, and has withheld from man what his purposes are respecting the other, is no less infinite in power than in love. Filling both space and time with his divine majesty and omnipresence, “ dwelling in the light which no man can

approach," and governing all worlds; why should vain man give himself any disquietude about minor circumstances, seeing that the only Potentate who inhabiteth heaven and earth hath freely vouchsafed information regarding the greater? We read, that at the consummation of all things, not only the earth, but the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements themselves shall melt with fervent heat. What other inquiry, then, than that of devout earnestness, how we may best conform ourselves to the will of one so mighty, ought to be ours? What language so appropriate as that which immediately follows the announcement in the context—"What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" Had the Holy Spirit even been more explicit upon the point of locality; unacquainted as we are with the geography of the universe, could the information have been otherwise than unavailable and useless? Earth itself was once, we read in holy writ, a paradise, and were those dread foes to man's happiness, sin and the fear of death, excluded from its precincts, who would undertake to say that it would not be such again?

He to whom all the promises interesting to man were originally made, and who is designated in scripture as the father of the faithful, so far

from having any mistrust in God's faithfulness, or overruling goodness, or exhibiting the least eagerness to be informed of the nature of the country to which he was instructed to proceed, set out without counting the loss of friends, or of his native home, any obstruction. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance," we read, "obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Such was the vivid character of the patriarch Abraham's faith, and such ever will be that of the true Israel, in spirit at least, whatever it may be in degree. Yet how different is their faith, who, were it possible, would carry with them over Jordan the relics of a world studded with iniquity, and enveloped in moral and intellectual gloom—who, not content to take the Maker of the universe at his word, notwithstanding all his assurances, would give up a Canaan out of all measure superior to the one offered to Abraham, rather than forego the pleasures and allurements of a poor perishing world for a season!

Well, indeed, might Abraham be thought and called the friend of God and the father of the faithful, seeing that his confidence in almighty power and goodness was so unshaken under circumstances the most trying to human endurance. Where should we now look for the single-mindedness that accompanied his departure from his kindred and his father's house, towards a land wherein he was a stranger; or for a faith so fervent as he exercised in looking through the figurative accomplishment of the promises on earth, to the spiritual realization of them in heaven? Most justly may it be said of this venerable patriarch, that he took the shield of faith, whereby he was enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; every action of his life being marked by the purest devotion to his God, and his whole history standing out as a trophy commemorative of the invincible power and divine efficacy of faith.

On that part of the subject, then, which on earth we should designate as one of time and space, we need not be under the slightest apprehension. He who is not only Governor of this world, but of all worlds—of systems where thought of man never yet essayed to travel, may surely be trusted implicitly upon a point so comparatively unimportant. To have the heart and affections

in all sincerity and truth, attuned to his praise in whose presence is life; that of itself were heaven—since He who is everywhere present would then be ever present to sustain, bless, and glorify his elect. Even out of heaven God hath appeared in perfect beauty; well may the heaven of heavens be expected to exhibit an expansion of beauty, an intensity of bliss, and a fulness of pleasure, such as man's weak powers would in vain attempt to comprehend.

When the Almighty, speaking in the person of the Redeemer, gave utterance to the words, "that eye hath not seen or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for such as love him," it may very fairly be questioned whether the words were not as much used in consideration of man's inability to understand things so lofty and divine, as from any wish on the part of our Lord to withhold more particular information. So many parables and other symbolical descriptions of the world to come are recorded in the New Testament, that the circumstance would all but seem decisive of the latter proposition being the true one, and certainly go to refute the opinion that the supposition is either imaginary or far-fetched. It would seem as if consideration for the effulgence of the object to be surveyed, on the

one hand, and regard for the opaque vision of the beholder, on the other, had led the author of the record in question to use every symbol at command, and every available exemplification which human circumstances could supply. Like as a magnifying lens has both the effect of bringing objects nearer to our view, and of magnifying them, so the various aspects under which heavenly things were presented to the mind of man by the Saviour of the world, at once brought them within the range of our mental vision, that is, to a certain extent, and by familiar analysis gave to them a reality and substance which otherwise had been impossible.

Even reason must admit, that all has been communicated to man consistent with his dependent nature, and the glorious attributes of that Being who formed him. Throughout the entire Gospel the Mediator between the creature and the Creator has embodied and promulgated such a perfect code of principles and spiritual excellence, that it were arrogance on the part of man, on that head, to wish for fuller or more substantial information. Doubtless there are those who would disparage the Bible, like as there ever have been ; but so long as the holiest, the wisest, and the foremost of mankind have testified in its favour, the petty carplings of such may well be disre-

garded. To their jaundiced eye, specks there may be; but ere they cavil at any part of that mysterious volume, let them well consider all the evidences to its truth, the fallibility of their judgment, and the presumption of their objections. Let them bear in mind that the standard therein laid down, and the entire writings therein contained, were intended for all times, countries, and capacities—that its principles were projected as well for an archangel as for the lowliest of the human race—and that if any portion of that sacred volume be true, then the whole must claim equal acquiescence. The principles with which the whole historic, prophetic, and doctrinal portions of that work are imbued, are those which form the immutable basis of truth; and, as such, are recognised and obeyed wherever the God of order has placed his throne, and deigns to communicate that happiness which flows exclusively from himself. Not for the want of necessary directions or authentication will any perish, but from hardness of heart and disbelief. The intrinsic excellence, as well as the extrinsic evidence, of the Bible, must ever refute all arguments brought against it, and stamp all that is in discordance with its doctrines as inimical both to the present and eternal interests of man.

From that sacred treasury we learn, that the

fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ; and how would the turbulence and distractions even of the present world be transformed, if those fruits were but general ! Some of the excellences just named, it is evident, in a future world must of necessity cease—though not from any insufficiency in themselves, but simply because they will be superseded by others of a completer character, and more consummate existence. Faith and hope, it is evident, must then be lost in sight, and long-suffering (however understood) will be commuted into perfect deliverance. Yet although faith shall thus terminate in realization, and hope in enjoyment—that charity which rightly understood compriseth all virtue, and which on earth formed the essence of our best actions, and was the fountain of our happiest and holiest feelings, will not only glow with undiminished splendour ; but, embued with aspirations, to the full comprehension of which insuperable barriers stand now opposed, will shine on with concentrated strength and indigenuous lustre in the kingdom of the blessed for ever and ever.

But let us proceed to notice, at greater length, some of the more specific excellences and surpassing joys which we are warranted in believing

will attend the elect in those mansions of unalloyed splendour prepared for them in heaven.

And first, we have it upon the word of God himself, that hereafter "we shall know even as we are known,"—in other words shall see the Father face to face, and be permitted to recognise, in all their fulness and perfection, every divine attribute of the Deity. What a glorious prospect to look forward to and prepare for! To be assured that we shall for ever repose amid the effulgent blaze of infinite intelligence, unclouded light, and immortality! With what immense toil do men in this world prosecute their studies, ere they arrive at any excellence or knowledge! How slowly, and as it were imperceptibly, do they surmount even the very rudiments of science, learning, or art! And even when the very zenith of human acquirement has been reached, how insufficient and unsatisfactory are all such achievements found to be for the purposes for which they were sought? In most cases the result of such assiduity is but to convict the individual of ignorance, to arouse the opposition of an envious and censorious world, or to puff up the possessor with conceit and self-sufficiency—things as contrary to the ends of all true wisdom or happiness as possible. Besides, there is the evanescent character of all such accomplishments to be taken into consideration. Even among

persons whose capacities are of the highest order, how few are exempt from weakness of one kind or other—weaknesses the more glaring and conspicuous, and as such fastened on by the world, on account of the contrasted splendour of their accompanying talents. In every instance, at last, death affixes his seal and obliterates all such coruscations of human genius, triumphing over and extinguishing their utmost blaze—should not second childhood previously have undermined and impaired their wonted brilliancy.

Not so, however, will it be amid the fields of light, intelligence, and truth. There, never-ending vistas of glory will eternally break forth upon the visual perceptions of infinite intelligences, and the bright page of uncreated day illumine and expand the exalted thoughts of glorified spirits and angels through never-ending cycles. Those realms of ether, now impervious to human frailty, will then disclose in all their majesty and immeasurable expanse each hidden sphere, and systems infinite. That our eyes shall behold and know all this, yea, much more than all this, is clearly deducible from the text already quoted,—namely, that we shall know even as we are known. “Here we behold,” it is written, “as in a glass darkly, but there face to face;” and surely all this would imply not only that we shall participate in all the trea-

asures of wisdom and knowledge with which the Eternal Mind is invested, but also be partakers of every other divine perfection by which heaven's throne is surrounded. He who gave his only Son to die for us, that we might be reinstated on the commanding eminence which transgression forfeited, "how shall he not," as the apostle Paul eloquently reasons, "with him, freely give us all things?"

Not as in this world, where, as has just been said, intelligence is arrived at by slow and imperceptible degrees, but as it were intuitively, and at once, the renovated spirit will be enabled to drink in the flood of light which will then beam forth. Beautifully as the dawn of morning unfolds itself, and gracefully as the shades of evening close around; and wisely adapted as those gradual vicissitudes of light and darkness are to the construction of the human eye, and to the sustentation of human wants; the breaking forth of that morn which shall herald in the consummation of all things, will be of an order of beauty and magnificence infinitely superior, as well as differing from the other in this particular—that its arrival will be instantaneous. "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Only to the elect, however, will that day exhibit

its beauty or its magnificence. Like as the conscience-stricken upon earth behold nor joy nor comfort amid the sunshine and cheerfulness of earthly prosperity, so with tenfold dismay will they be borne down, who have despised their Creator, and inflicted the deadliest of wounds upon their consciences by shutting out the light of his Holy Spirit. On the other hand, arrayed in majesty ineffable, shall they go forth from the confines of the tomb who have pursued a contrary, line of conduct. Freed of their earthly load, their disencumbered souls shall mount on wings ethereal and all their dormant faculties, inspired by objects worthy their immortal natures, shall still new lustre reach, and higher pleasures gain.

Undoubtedly, ere this expansion of an immortal intelligence shall ensue, the body which was sown in weakness shall have become a glorious body; and one of the most striking and astounding of all the changes we shall undergo in the future world, will be that of incorruptibility. "When this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written—"Death is swallowed up in victory; O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through Jesus

Christ our Lord.”—In this world everything we see or feel, has thereon the impress of death. Not only does everything inanimate or animate imperceptibly undergo the most complete change, but all man’s internal feelings are daily becoming benumbed, and crumbling into dust—at least all such feelings as are essentially connected with the material and existing world. It was the doom passed upon our unhappy parents at the fall, and most inflexibly has it been executed. For where, alas! are all the monuments of bygone ages? Even the pyramids of Egypt are silently mouldering away in all their massive and almost impregnable solidity, or are in the act of being gained upon by the heaving sands which desolate the neighbourhood of those mementos of human presumption. Where are the less stupendous but more finished and intellectual trophies of antiquity—for the pyramids owe their comparative immutability to a similar cause to that which has preserved the “everlasting hills” in all their lofty pre-eminence and elevation. What has become of the triumphal arches, statues and temples raised to perpetuate the memory of the successive conquerors of the world?—or where are the records of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Tyre, of Carthage—or much of the literature which the ancient seats of learning and philosophy, from time to time, have

produced ? Alas ! the devouring hand of time, and the winds of heaven, have dispersed them all ! The airs which once wafted fragrance and health upon those distinguished marts of commerce, of civilization, and of learning, now murmur, amid desolation and silence, sounds which seem to have traversed unbroken solitudes, and to be freighted with the moans of departed grandeur. Where those cities once stood in all their pride and elaborate grandeur, as London, Paris, or Petersburg now stand, no trace of civilization, much less of architectural display, or imperial rule, is to be discovered. In reality, in glancing our eye over the existing outline of the various continents of the world, we can have no positive assurance that even whole provinces, once fertile and luxuriant, have not returned to sterility, or that ocean's empire has not swept away whole kingdoms with his continuous and indomitable surge.

As to the dominion and supremacy of man, brief indeed is their duration, and circumscribed their extent. Though for a time he be decked out with all the pomp and circumstance of inflated superiority, how insignificant, when surveyed, do his retrospective annals appear ! Though cradled amid every external advantage, and favoured with all that wisdom or wealth could supply, what has ever been the history of his best efforts and

noblest projects? Let the wisest, as well as one of the loftiest of earth's monarchs, answer the interrogatory. "I communed with mine own heart," (it is Solomon who makes the confession,) "saying, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem. I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards." "So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me." "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought;" "and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit."—Such was the living testimony of the king of Israel to the unsatisfactory nature of all earthly empire and possessions, and unquestionably the admission has not been falsified by any subsequent experience, or invalidated by the real position the face of universal nature wears at the present moment. All is palpably in a state of mutation, every thing of a disappointing character, and each object by which we are surrounded hastening to one common tomb.

Well, therefore, may the idea presented to the mind, of an incorrupt state of being strike us as well with astonishment as ecstasy, seeing that it is at once so novel and stupendous. Borne down, generation after generation, with corruption, how

glorious is the beam of hope which now illumines and gladdens our pathway ! How pre-eminently gratifying the promise which assures us, that the corruption which is of the earth shall have an end, and that incorruption and the brightness of a never-ending felicity will commingle in the renovation which awaits believers ! Well may our hearts be filled with love and wonder, and our tongues with praise, seeing that beneficence has been vouchsafed in such rich profusion. Well may boundless love demand at our hands boundless gratitude. Corruption was the very body of the penalty incurred by sin, and that which has been interwoven throughout the whole realm of nature, since it first entered.

Sentence, however, has gone forth, and soon the havoc sin has wrought shall be repaired,—the penal clause annulled. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” “The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality.” Though death be the goal to which the career of all men tends—that of the monarch no less than the peasant—of the warrior’s prowess as well as the slave’s degradation, of the statesman’s eloquence and the mechanic’s toil, of the courtier’s honour and the beggar’s wretchedness ; and

though neither strength nor wisdom can elude his iron grasp, nor foresight, skill, or subterfuge arrest his progress when once instructed to enforce his dread commission; yet beyond the confines of his fell dominion are arrayed mansions impervious to his utmost wiles—inheritances whereunto his deadliest malice cannot reach. Though neither age nor clime now interpose any barrier to his inexorable power, nor condition be any safeguard from his ruthless sway; though round the world his barbed shafts relentlessly exert their influence—as heedless of innocence ostensibly as regardless of circumstance and reckless of consequence; yet but for a time hath death this wide-wasting empire delivered into his hands, and soon his cruelty must end. Both death and hell ere long must yield the palm, and cease their tyrannous hate—when “all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth.” From that all-powerful voice shall death and hell instinctively each shrink confounded and abashed; the commission of the former being finally annulled and their mutual league for ever set aside. Then they who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine like the stars in the kingdom of their Father for ever and ever; and they who have seduced many to their ruin, whether men or fallen spirits, shall be over-

whelmed with everlasting destruction—which is the second death. Yet, although God will be avenged on his enemies, “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them which know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ”—yet, inasmuch as mercy rejoiceth against judgment, and judgment is at all times his strange work, when the vengeance has been executed, the sword shall be again and for ever restored to its scabbard.

CHAPTER III.

OF the relative worth of the divine excellences which have already been noticed, and of those which are yet to be enumerated, it is somewhat difficult to speak. Whether love, or holiness, or intelligence, should take the precedence in the arrangement, however, is quite immaterial. Like as eternity is oftentimes shadowed forth, and not inaptly, by a circle, so the assemblage of graces on which it is here presumed to offer a few remarks, may be considered as commingling and uniting, so as to form one perfect whole, after a similar manner. At best, heavenly things are only to be designated and illustrated by such comparatively poor objects as earth places at our disposal; and, therefore, in treating of infinite perfection—which to finite minds, at least, consists of many details—some order and arrangement is to be observed. The very necessity of the case requires a begin-

ning and an end. The defectiveness of language, and the finite conceptions of the human mind, impose such obligations ; and, therefore, of the relative importance or excellence of the several virtues or qualities of mind of which it is proposed to treat, no particular notice need be taken. They will briefly be discussed in such order as occurs to the mind of the writer, and are to be regarded as the fragment of a whole, or as an attempt at shadowing forth that perfection which is otherwise indescribable.

To use the language of earth, not only one of the most illustrious but of the most specific features of heaven, will indisputably be perfect holiness. Without holiness, it has been expressly and most emphatically declared, no man shall see the Lord. Consequently, the negation of all evil dispositions which was before stated as constituting a body of divine knowledge with regard to the future world of which we were possessed, strictly applies to that affection of the mind which infers an utter rejection of every impurity, and an innate delight in all that is good.—What the sovereign Disposer of the universe has laid down as an imperative condition, on no account whatever to be violated, will most assuredly be exacted, and must, from an equal necessity, be right, and just, and good.

To know that nothing unholy can enter into

the New Jerusalem, neither anything that defileth, or that maketh a lie, of itself forms a pledge of infinite comfort and satisfaction. And of a negative character although it be in some respects, that is, in regard to our not understanding the extent of perfect holiness; yet the certainty that whatever militates in the slightest proportion against that degree thereof with which we are acquainted, shall be for ever excluded from heaven's confines, is an assurance of the most significant and comprehensive character. Though the tares and the wheat in this world derive a common benefit from the ordinances of an all-bounteous Giver; refreshing showers and the light of heaven falling equally on the just and on the unjust; yet this equalizing dispensation and commingling of the good with the wicked shall not last for ever. The bad example of the one, and the holy influences of the other, that is, their mutual influences, in due season, will certainly come to a perpetual end, and a final division and eternal separation be made. "In the time of harvest," says the eternal Word, "I will say to the reapers, gather together, first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." And again the Spirit saith, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

The very circumstance of holiness militating in the most formidable manner with the whole catalogue of earthly corruptions, would seem to entitle this cardinal excellence to the precedence which has here been given to it. To none other of the divine perfections is earth's clime more adverse, or its enmity more unequivocally displayed ; every imagination of man's heart being alike evil and unholy. There may be the outward appearance of love and joy, and many other praiseworthy emotions ; but this is one which appertains to the very heart and its issues—which human wickedness cannot counterfeit, and which reigns alone in the affections, modelled after his spirit, whose name is love, and whose very essence is holiness. " Out of the heart," saith the Scripture, " proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." In short, from the corrupt source of an unsanctified or unholy heart flow all the mischiefs which distract communities, or embitter the happiness of individuals. To the sovereign arbiter of both, alone belongeth holiness now, although, when that period shall have arrived of which we are writing, holiness shall universally prevail. In the bright regions of eternal day, instead of every imagination of man's heart being only evil continually, as now, every feeling of his renovated nature shall vibrate

and respond to that holiness which shall pervade and surround the whole family of created beings, no less than their ever-blessed Creator.

Together with holiness, the beatitude of the new creation will be exhibited amid a fervency of love unknown to any other clime, save that of heaven. The cold affinities and lukewarm affections of earth's inhabitants towards heavenly things, will all be exchanged for that embodied expression of love, which, as it can only emanate from the Father of spirits, so will it now, under that supreme and ever-present influence, expand into all its indigenous grandeur and eminence—receiving and giving back, in never-intermitting supplies, those exalted charities which grace began, and glory consummated. Nor intelligence nor good-will will then be overcast, or shrouded with the discordances which now perplex and mar the fairest, loveliest, and most valuable of earth's scenes, but all will be unanimity, and peace, and joy.

How few the hearts are, that truly beat in unison upon earth, it is melancholy to reflect. Yet amid the multitude of failures—failures resulting from unnumbered imperfections—some few there are can tell how sweet that cup is, connubial bliss when pure bestows,—can estimate the exalted joys which spring from fond affection. To live,

and move, and think not for themselves, but those whose thoughts they prize, whose goodness they can appreciate, and whose esteem they are ever emulous to return; O what delight, even upon earth, thus to love and honourably confide, where all our interests are secure, our happiness supreme! Yes, love indeed is "light from heaven," a ray of that transcendent quality of mind, which, as well as enlivening only a few fitful hours of weakness and of pain—things inseparable from humanity in its best estate—shall one day burst forth in all its godlike splendour—no more to be obscured with clouds—no more to merge in passion, distrust, or gloom. He who on Calvary exhibited such love as imagination never contemplated, hath in his own love depicted the intensity of that of his followers. Although in this world the heavenly flame of which we are treating may never exhibit itself in anything like the fervency the occasion demands, owing to our manifold weakness and innate wretchedness; yet, in the world to come, all will be fervency, sincerity, and truth—love without alloy, and gratitude for an infinite deliverance, without stint or measure. Arrayed in the robe of Christ's righteousness, we shall need no other passport to His presence, who is over all from the beginning, and with Him shall be introduced to all the Father's love, and to all other his divine perfections.

Divested of all earthly taint, how shall the veneration that was on earth, restricted to unworthy objects, at the best, expand and become enlarged when He who is altogether lovely shall fraternize and dwell for ever with his saints ! Conubial love, though sweet, to this bears no comparison. The love of offspring, even as exhibited in a mother's breast, placed in competition with such commanding blessedness, dwindles into utter insignificance. The fondness of this world, viewed under its noblest aspect, is selfish, imperfect, sensual ; while that which will be ushered in at the day of final reckoning will be perfect, immortal, infinite.

In forming earthly attachments, regard is had to the merits or assumed merits of those with whom we connect ourselves. Yet they whom we regard as great or good, amiable or virtuous, are only so in a relative degree ; perfect amiability upon earth being nowhere to be found. But He whom we are commanded to love now, and whom the glorified spirits in heaven shall ever esteem it their highest privilege so to love, is as amiable as he is glorious, as good as he is great. Well, therefore, may the purest love of the holiest of his saints become lost in wonder, love, and praise, while adoring so exalted a Being. As well as loving him because he first loved them,

and gave himself a ransom for many, they will love him because he is altogether lovely, great, and glorious in himself. Perfect in love, infinite in power, and supreme in holiness, well may universal empire and honour and glory unto Him be ascribed for ever and ever.

Of Heaven's eternal justice, and supreme abhorrence of sin, let Calvary's blood-stained hill bear ample testimony. Dire, indeed, was the wickedness which called for such a remedy, as well as rigid the justice which demanded it. But when once indignation has been aroused, what justice so retributively dreadful as goodness set at naught, and love despised? Were he who rules otherwise than what he is, and what his works loudly proclaim him to be, then might angels reprobate as well as guilty man have plea to urge in bar of judgment. But in presence of that all gracious Benefactor, whose long-suffering to us-ward is unbounded, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," what shadow of pretence can be put forward for rejecting the terms which have been so munificently and so frankly offered? "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel." To such gracious and beneficent offers, what valid excuse can be

framed? Could words of more compassionate import, or a more perfect amnesty, have been vouchsafed? If the Saviour of the world, touched with the enormity of its sinfulness, impenitence, and mistrust, wept over the devoted city where all his mighty works had been done; well may the lukewarmness and the aggravated and unjustifiable neglect of professing Christians call down upon them a similar lamentation and denouncement to that which was uttered against the Jews. For eighteen hundred years, agreeably with what was predicted, the things "which made for their peace," have been hid from their eyes; an example of the severity as well as goodness of the Almighty Governor of the world, which holds out serious matter for consideration to all devout believers. It is true the Jewish nation saw and disbelieved: yet, although we have not seen the mighty works which were done in Jerusalem, the testimony upon which they one and all rest is so complete, and our other advantages over the Jews so numerous, that our unbelief, it is to be feared, is not a whit less, if not even greater, than theirs. Notwithstanding that the Saviour must have known the cruel treatment which awaited him, how pathetic and marked by deep commiseration are the strains in which he mourned over the devoted

city. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your city is left unto you desolate." Anything more tender or more eloquently gracious than this, the whole circle of polite literature cannot produce. Yet is it only one of the many forcible appeals, with which the whole sacred volume abounds—and which one and all will add to our condemnation, should the same hardness of heart which prevailed among the Jews unhappily reign amongst Christians.

Although justice may sound harshly, taken in connexion with many other attributes of the Deity, yet, without justice, what would human society, of which alone we can rightly judge, become? Then how dare we to arraign, or presume even to judge of, that dispensation which is constituted, not for this isolated spot alone, but for the well-ordering of ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, for aught we know to the contrary. It ought to be considered sufficient that we have the divine assurance, that mercy rejoiceth against judgment, and that although justice holds coequality with mercy and all the other perfections of the Godhead, that never-

theless "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." If almighty justice be established in the heavens, so also is the infinite prerogative or attribute of love. "In all their afflictions," we read, "he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare and carried them all the days of old."

Sincerity and truth, qualities almost universally wanting upon earth, will be among the excellences which shall irradiate and imbue every occupant of heaven; cementing in the most uninterrupted harmony "the church of the first-born." Within the pale of that blessed church, nothing that loveth a lie can by possibility enter. Though the father of lies, and they whom he has seduced and plunged into the nethermost abyss, in despite of all that mercy infinite could devise, fret and vex themselves "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and clay," yet shall they not prevail against the humblest of heaven's worshippers. He who laid down his life for the sheep, the good Shepherd, hath declared, that "my Father, who gave me them, is greater than all, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand." He himself, who cannot lie, having redeemed them from the power of the

evil one, will for ever shield them from all attacks which his malice or duplicity might desire to inflict. Although in the garden of Eden the dire encounter to which man was subjected was more than he could parry, yet into the paradise of God not even the wiles of Satan will be able to effect an entrance. Having once forfeited all right to those bowers of bliss, his expulsion therefrom is eternal. The effrontery, which was equal to the invasion of earth, and to an encounter with our first parents, will recoil upon its author,—and “the old serpent” stand abashed ere he reach even the remotest confines of heaven’s offended majesty. Once having been found faithful unto death, never again shall man be subjected to his malice. Having been found worthy to receive the crown of life, never henceforward shall death by any possibility be placed in his way by the tempter, or any contingent artifice or fraud be suffered to obtain the mastery. The wall of the city having twelve foundations, and the building of the wall being made of jasper, (Rev. xxi. 14, 18,) will offer an insurmountable barrier to all possible surprise. Though, “without the gates of the city, there may be dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie;” yet within, there will be nothing but security and assurance for ever. No more

deception, no more disappointment, no more distraction. Truth, and truth only, shall be the distinguishing badge of the whole family of heaven, unalloyed by suspicion, and unclouded by doubt. "He that is unjust," saith the Spirit, "let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

With what moral beauty does each sentiment, flowing directly from the heart, attract the notice of mankind, and find its way to every bosom! Yet how rarely do we meet with such unalloyed sincerity upon earth! Although it be the quality which alone constitutes the essential happiness of social intercourse, stamping true friendship with its characteristic worth, and forming both the charm and pledge of every nuptial endearment; how seldom are such enjoyments realized in their utmost purity! Like as the stars which bespangle heaven's vault, give to the evening hour a certain degree of radiance and splendour; so the bright influences of truth shining through the dense clouds by which this nether world is surrounded, yield to the scene a similar widely-diffused and well-defined—though, alas, distantly reflected and attenuated expansion of light and beauty. And if upon earth, where the vestiges of truth are so feeble, the soul thereon repose as upon its chiefest good,

with what entranced delight shall it participate in that faithfulness and truth, which in heaven shall eternally and universally prevail !

No inconsiderable importance, humanly speaking—and that is the only point of view in which the whole subject has been undertaken—is to be attached to the consideration, that in heaven there will be no invidious distinctions, such as prevail upon earth. The terms rich and poor, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, will perish together with the material frame to which they belong. As it is written, “All shall know me, (whom to know is life eternal, and wisdom infinite,) from the least to the greatest, saith the Lord Almighty.” There will no more be any distaste from an implied or real inferiority, either of mind or circumstances, since all will be equally the objects of parental regard, and equally pre-eminent as the recipients of His bounty, who hath begotten us anew in Christ Jesus. The effulgence of divine love will exclude every fear, perfect holiness insure an infinity of happiness, and unclouded joy banish for ever each unworthy desire—every discordant and unamiable thought. He who calleth the stars—not the few known to man alone, but the myriads which fill creation’s bound—by their names, and hath given to the sea a decree which it cannot pass, hath promised

all this, and who shall call it in question? Surrounded by the everlasting arms of his love, we shall have indeed an object worthy at once of our gratitude, and of our supreme adoration. When once this mortal coil, with all its littleness and puerile distinctions, shall have been thrown off, then shall a nobler emulation, and a more worthy rivalry, if the word may be tolerated, commence. Supplied with every needful—every possible appendage to happiness, and every taint of earth dispelled; then shall an Eden of ecstasy and unalloyed bliss commence, such as even our first parents, with all their transporting innocence, never knew. Though we are not able, even in thought, now to realize the full extent of the promises made respecting that holy hill and lovely dwelling—yet, with Christ Jesus for our present advocate and future associate, what may not be expected by the very humblest of the human race, from a perfectly reconciled Father and God?

Entire cessation from labour will constitute another feature and characteristic in the habitations which hereafter shall be disclosed to the elect of God. At least, all toil which is irksome, or in the smallest degree vain and unprofitable, will for ever be dispelled. It was the commission of sin which first led to the denouncement of the

curse on the whole race of Adam—"in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread until thou return unto the ground;" and when once the cause is removed, not only will every vestige of the penalty cease, but a far more glorious inheritance be ours by reversion, than through the first Adam ever could have descended to his offspring.

It is a merciful dispensation, and intended as such, that to the righteous in this world it not unfrequently happens that more of the troubles of life, as well as a larger share of temptation and all its attendant disquietudes, are awarded, than to such as seem to spurn at every religious obligation, and apparently live without God in the world. To some this may seem an anomaly, and in a certain sense it is. But when the whole scheme of a Christian's life is examined, the Scriptures of truth are attentively surveyed, and their whole tenor honestly scrutinized; the manner in which the Father of the faithful deals out his chastisement, so far from proving his neglect or unconcern, proves directly the contrary, and evinces in the fullest degree his tender compassion and most affectionate regard. Though temptation upon temptation, privations of every kind, with poverty, sickness, and cold neglect, have in every age been the portion of many of the worshippers of the only true God; yet, if we could now ask those

holy men who have departed this life for a better, of their estimate of those trials, doubtless we should be answered, that to those tribulations were they mainly indebted for all their indomitable perseverance and spiritual advancement.

By the thoughtless and superficially informed, too often is this apparent disparity of circumstances enjoyed by the good and evil regarded as adverse to the principles of justice, while by others it is thought inscrutable and mysterious. To the devout believer it would seem neither one nor the other, but consonant to all we might have expected, and perfectly consistent with the principles laid down in every page of the Bible,—and that for a twofold reason.—First, it cannot but be obvious, that when there is no restraint, no moral principle of rectitude, to hold in check the wild propensities of mankind, there must be facilities for obtaining worldly distinction—such as it is—which do not exist where truth and every other requirement of the Divine law are to be carried into active and continual exercise. Even worldly-minded men cannot but perceive such to be the case, although they profess—but only profess, to believe in the maxim that honesty is the best policy. And with respect to the mysteriousness which has been supposed by some as attaching to the unequal distribution

of the good things of this world, it may simply be observed—that nowhere does the inspired volume hold out any other prospect to the christian soldier, than a state of continual warfare. Even the Captain of our salvation, we read, was made perfect through suffering; and so far from its being considered a hardship that Christians should suffer with him, it ought to be regarded as a dispensation of mercy. If earthly fathers, for their pleasure, oftentimes chasten their offspring, well may that Father which is in heaven, for his people's profit, also administer chastisement.

St. Paul justly reasons, that were it possible that Christians should be disappointed in their expectations, they must of all men be most miserable. The utter annihilation of hopes inconceivably great and glorious, together with the sufferings and trials of this present life, could not be otherwise than a combination of unmitigated severity. In proportion as the probationary and consummate scenes are unique and beautiful when viewed in the order in which they are represented by divine revelation, in such degree do they become dark and gloomy when that arrangement is set aside, and the mutual connexion of the two states is disparaged. But let God be true, though every man be found a liar. “Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he promised,

and shall he not bring it to pass?" His arm, who formed the round world, and the sea, and all that they contain, is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear. "He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."

Soon will the righteous rest from their labours; and oppressions and disasters, if such they feel, will come to a perpetual end—in that bright world where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. An eternal Sabbath will at length dawn, and realize more than the aspirant after immortality ever dreamed of. As the universal Father rested from his labour of creation when the six days were completed, so grace having accomplished the operation of newly-creating the hearts of his people in Christ Jesus, they too shall enter upon their eternal and uninterrupted Sabbath—one befitting their enlarged capacity and exalted power. No employments await them there, but such as are suited to the sacredness of the place, adapted to their own free choice, and consistent with the usages of the thrice happy society by which they will uninterruptedly be surrounded. In one sense only, and that a glorious one, will their rest be uninterrupted. Together with all those who sur-

round the throne, hereafter shall be consummated in them what the beloved apostle in the Apocalypse has described as filling the whole ethereal throng who surround the throne—"They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power"; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Another excellence which will shed a distinguishing lustre over the abodes of bliss, and impart an entirely new character to the society of which they will be composed from all that ever preceded them on earth, will be that of their entire freedom from pride. If one characteristic indicative of something superior to humanity shone forth more brilliantly in the Son of God while upon earth than another, it was that of humility. What a depth of humiliation, indeed, did his very advent imply, his birth and parentage! To have left the throne of the Father in order to take upon him the likeness of sinful man; what blended meekness and love did it not express!—to say nothing of his having to sustain every species of indignity which envy could invent, every cruelty which malice dared exert, every plot which wickedness had contrived to circumvent him in

his righteous career, and heap degradation on his head. Nor was his voluntary submissiveness of disposition less conspicuous. Far from seeking the applauses of men, or courting the notice of the powerful, like others,—all his regards were bestowed upon the poor and needy, on publicans and sinners. In this respect most fully did he verify the commandment he enunciated—"When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee. For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." In washing his disciples' feet, and performing other similar acts of condescension, his own practice and deportment invariably illustrated the precepts which with so much dignity and truth he everywhere inculcated.

Of all the stains which pollute man's nature, none is more deadly or universal than that of pride, and no other is there by which the just displeasure of Almighty God is so frequently aroused. Widely disseminated as is every species of this unsubdued temper upon earth, where pride of ancestry, of personal appearance, of wealth, of intellect, and countless other imaginary and assumed pre-eminences prevail, a more offensive habit of mind is not to be found within the whole black catalogue of human depravity. Even in regard to

man, this hateful vice is at the very root of his most embittered woes. And as respects the Author of his being, not from any single passage of divine revelation is its offensive character to be gathered, but from texts, all but innumerable. The averment that God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble, is interwoven with every portion of that divine treatise, and indelibly stamped upon almost every one of its pages. So effectually has this been done, so fully has the hatefulness of the principle been developed in positive precepts or incidental allusions, that upon this subject he who runs may read. In fact, the universality and certainty of the command are coincident with the extensive range and notoriety of the crime. Yet when it is considered what contradiction of sinners, and inconceivable humility thereunder, the Saviour of mankind suffered and evinced on the one hand, and what mischiefs pride has entailed upon those portions of the universe where its baneful effects have been experienced on the other; how ought the reflection to force conviction upon every mind, as to the heinous nature of a vice which has occasioned the blessed Redeemer such a depth of humiliation, and its victims such a load of woe! How ought the consideration of such degradation and wretchedness—the ruin of a world, and the subversion of

a province of heaven, having been occasioned by pride—banish from our regard every vain-glorious and false conceit, and teach us to pray for the advent of that kingdom where pride shall be for ever excluded, and where all the grace of a meek and lowly spirit shall be duly recognised, nurtured, and appreciated!

What is the proximate cause of almost every human calamity, but the absence of a gentle and contrite disposition? From whence come wars and fightings, the root of all evil—the love of money, and every baneful lust which interdicts and disturbs the repose of man? May they not, one and all, with the utmost truth be ascribed to the hell-born passion which disenthroned one of the loftiest of heaven's spirits, and drove man from paradise? Inasmuch as humility and love are two of the cardinal associates of divinity, so are hatred and pride the master-passions of the devil and his angels. The attendants of all that is little and abject, are invariably to be discerned in the one; all that is exalted and God-like, are inseparably connected with the other. "Pride," we read, "goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." And again, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." In the beatitudes pronounced by the Saviour in the Sermon on

the Mount, it is written, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth;" and again, in another part of Scripture, "A broken heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." As, in the bright exemplar Christ hath set us, humility and lowliness of mind are conjoined with loveliness, we may receive the same as an earnest and assurance that, in the divine presence, humility, irradiating with its chastened splendour the utmost confines of heaven, will ever be found among the foremost of the heavenly graces encircling the throne, and pervading the throng who worship Him that sitteth thereon.

CHAPTER IV.

AMID the adjuncts of heaven's delights, if such an expression may be hazarded, it is not improbable but music may form no inconsiderable portion—seeing that it is an accompaniment of no mean account in some of the loftiest aspirations associated with our feelings upon earth. We are told that the trump of God will harbinger in the great and all-important day of retribution ; and, in many other passages of Scripture, allusion is made to this subject in a way to justify the expectation, that in heaven the hallelujahs of the blessed, and celestial music, will commingle. It is true, there may not be much specifically advanced upon the subject ; yet it is by no means an irrational conclusion to infer, that the harmony of heaven will perpetuate something of that attractive ceremonial which has ever prevailed in all the earthly churches. David, the man after God's own heart, is no less

celebrated for his divine and poetic cadence than for his minstrelsy, which, we read, accompanied his inspired overflowings of devotional ardour. To praise God upon the tabret and harp seemed his most delightful effort. It is also written in the revelation of St. John, that “after the Lamb had taken the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne, the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof.”

That the harps here described are not after the pattern of any similar instrument with which man is acquainted, may well be imagined—and for this all-sufficient reason, that with the rudiments only of either this or any other subject is man acquainted. There are difficulties which he cannot master, even at the very threshold of the science in question; but when the inconceivable extent to which an infinite knowledge of everything connected with the tuneful art may be expected to elevate it is fully considered, what a grandeur of conception does it not give rise to! If the echoes heard among rocks and hills delight us, how will the reverberations of ten thousand spheres transport the soul with their harmony! On this, as upon every similar topic, however, the human

mind must be bewildered. Such knowledge is too wonderful; we cannot attain unto it. Yet it is something that even a symbol has been vouchsafed, whereby we gather that the dulcet sounds of earth, which oftentimes strike the soul with mysterious joy or melancholy, will hereafter burst forth in one continuous flow of praise and ecstasy. He who fills what man variously, because in ignorance, calls the concave or convex heaven, can alone present us with the capacity to scan the germs of either this or any similar knowledge. Yet even a glimpse of so vast a theme ought to fill our hearts with gratitude, and endue us with patience, well knowing that the day is fast approaching when all shall be made clear—"when the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." To Him who sitteth over all from the beginning, are all our orisons and hallelujahs due. With Israel's tuneful monarch we ought to praise God with every breath we draw, "in his sanctuary and in the firmament of his power, for his mighty acts and excellent greatness," and upon instruments of all kinds of music, seeing that he is at once the Author of our being, of our salvation, and of our happiness both here and hereafter.

As another adjunct to the joys of heaven, can

it be doubted that, amid the constellation of divine perfections and graces, beauty will not shine forth with illimitable lustre and attractiveness? He who has placed the world in a firmament of light and splendour, and stamped upon it a thousand traces of his regard, decking the blushing spring, the teeming summer, and the mellow autumn respectively with beauties innumerable, doubtless hath in store treasures of beauty commensurate with the capacities of an exhaustless mind, as well as scenes of loveliness worthy of being eternally gazed upon and admired.

Who has not been struck with the majestic outline of the mountain-tops, the heavings of the mighty ocean, the grandeur of the foaming cataract; or has not felt inspiration glow at sight of waving harvests, sunny meads, or limpid brooks—sparkling with beauty? Even of the grace which is visible on earth, who shall adequately sketch the mighty portraiture? And if it be impossible to paint the never-ending tints of flowers, or justice do to song of birds and hum of bees; to designate the thousand scents that fill the gale, or draw the splendours of the starry sky,—well may the attempt be foregone that would treat of an order of beauty, combining infinity with grandeur, and unfading loveliness with uninterrupted dominion. If everything we see, or hear, or feel, in

this dark world of sin and death, be fraught with never-ending grace and beauty, to what a height of untold rapture may not the soul look forward, when the Author of this lower creation shall have removed the film from all eyes, and shall exhibit himself as the perfection of beauty in all imaginable splendour and power? Surrounded by the halo of his love, and by the never-fading beauties amid which his kingdom will be established, revolving ages may well roll on in ceaseless harmony, without either discomposure, surfeit, or alloy.

That peace and righteousness, joy, purity, and innocence, with each cardinal virtue, and every possible excellence, will attend the elect in that bright world where all is beautiful as calm,—and that everything adverse thereto will be excluded, is placed beyond the possibility of doubt. Well, therefore, may it be affirmed, not only that we have a negative perception of heaven's joys, but much which claims for itself even a positive character. Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, inasmuch as they were the chief, or rather the only excellencies of earth,—so will they, with increased and never-intermitting lustre and comprehensiveness, expand and increase in the courts above. Through countless ages they will continue to illumine and delight the happy spirits once privileged to enter upon such high enjoyment. Had it

been otherwise—had the duration of these joys not been eternal as well as infinite, then had the happiness been incomplete. Though myriads of untold ages were in prospect, yet, were it possible that they should ever end, how short of what it is, had been the promised happiness! Instead of being at once glorious and unlimited, each added year had shorn our happiness of its chiefest excellence, and dimmer made each morn. But praised be the name of Omnipotence, eternity, not time, is heaven's portion. Precious as are the gems with which glory's crown is studded, the brightest far is, immortality. Commensurate with all the other excellencies and glories of heaven, it is this which gives supremacy of bliss, and all its loftiness, to the entire conception. The ocean's sands may all run out and be exhausted; the starry orbs, one after another, perish from heaven's wondrous vault; but the immortal spirit's range shall know no bound. Though the material universe throughout its extent pass away and be no more, yet shall the happy soul, loftiest and most valuable of created things soar, unto its God, and share with him eternity.

The last topic connected with the illustration of the joys of heaven, upon which it is intended to offer a remark or two, is that of the glorious attribute of infinity—a character which seems

associated with everything appertaining to divine felicity. Of eternity itself, something has just been said; and however sceptically-disposed persons may doubt the reality of a future world, and its eternal duration, the profundity of the wisdom which planned man's redemption, and thereby evidenced infinite love, and the acknowledged wondrous expansion of the universe, which as manifestly exhibits almighty power,—ought for ever to dispel from such minds the semblance of a doubt. If He who is omnipotent, and “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” instead of destroying a world polluted by sin, thought good to rescue it from perdition; how dare human reason doubt the fact, that He whose loving-kindness prompted him so to interpose, is infinite, not only in wisdom and power—but in mercy, and in all other his divine perfections. Well may finite minds stand abashed and confounded at the contemplation of such stupendous truths—not presumptuously reject what, even to their limited range of intellect, is stamped with infinity. With equal consistency might they deny the reality of the world of thought within them, or the comparative immensity of the orbs which science has revealed in the visible heavens, as attempt to disparage the smallest of the attributes of Deity.

Not one of the perfections it has herein been

presumed to sketch as forming part of heaven's joys, but in that blessed place will be found invested with the quality of infinity. Endless happiness will for ever result from infinite holiness, truth, intelligence, and love. How far the spirits of the just will participate in every attribute of Deity, it is not for created beings to inquire. They are described in Scripture as being "made perfect," and numerous are the passages which clearly point to a state of boundless happiness and unimaginable exaltation. Though no other idea of heaven's joys than those which have been enumerated were to be formed, and the character of infinity or perfection were thereto annexed, what an expansiveness of bliss does not even that thought convey! With our obtuse conceptions of perfect righteousness or infinite virtue, well might it be recorded in the Scriptures of truth,—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (Cor. i. 9, 10, 11.)

The illimitable glories of the starry firmament,

and the endless chain of being by which earth is tenanted, loudly proclaim his dominion and Godhead, for whom and by whom they were created. Great and endless as the happiness of his people shall be ; to the great Jehovah alone belong exclusively power, adoration, and omniscience. Though myriads of saints surround the throne of the Most High, and share in the glories by which he is surrounded, yet, to Him who sitteth thereon, essentially belong supremacy and independence. The fountain of light, immortality, and joy ; to " the only wise God," who dwelleth in the high and holy place, are to be ascribed majesty and honour for ever and ever. To him alone, in its loftiest sense, can the language of the psalmist be ascribed, when he says, " O Lord my God, thou art very great ; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment : who stretchest out the heavens as a curtain : who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters : who maketh the clouds his chariot : who walketh upon the wings of the wind : who maketh his angels spirits ; his ministers a flaming fire."

The magnificent description from which this passage is extracted, (see Psalm 104,) although it notice but the operations of the Almighty upon this speck of earth, yet does it vindicate his

infinite power and Godhead. After describing the varied manifestations of power and goodness exhibited to all his creatures, it goes on to say ; " These wait all upon thee ; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather : thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled : thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust."

Such is the glowing acknowledgment given by the Psalmist to the sovereignty of the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Throughout the whole range of material and animate existence, Order is evidently " Heaven's first law." In other words, all that is demonstrable either to reason or the senses, obliges us to recognise a uniformity of purpose, combining perfect goodness and boundless authority. He who is over all from the beginning—the disseminator of every good and perfect gift, is also at the head of all principality and power ; and, in right of such eternal power and Godhead, holds out to all created beings the assurance of infinite happiness. Arrayed in every perfection of the divine nature, and evermore defended by the omnipotence of the one Uncreated Mind, it will be the loftiest happiness of the saints hereafter to worship

and adore that one true God "who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Seeing, then, what a glorious inheritance is in store for the children of God, let it be ours to seek after those affections, and that state of mind, which can alone either qualify us for its enjoyment, or give us a title thereunto. That we may be worthy of such manifold blessedness, let us at all times, with the apostle Paul, "bow the knee unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."—He who has promised to withhold no good thing from them that love him, to make all things work together for their good, and who hath already given assurance of his sincerity in that he hath raised up Christ from the dead,—well may he expect it of us, that we too should rise to newness of life. If, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, God hath

quicken us together with Christ, "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus,"—how can we, with so strong a pledge, either resist his proffered salvation, or doubt that when our imperfect righteousness shall have become as "filthy rags," all that an Almighty Saviour can give will be our portion?

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Though seduced by the father of lies to their present undoing, they were originally created in innocence, and, through the infinite mercies of an heavenly Father, to a state of happiness and innocence shall they be restored. Having been sealed with that holy spirit of promise, "which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession;" with holy boldness and certain hope may Christians look forward to the fulfilment of the whole counsel of God. Seeing that the God and Father of all has not thought it beneath his dignity, nor incompatible with his divine perfections—now that a ransom has been effected, and a full end made of transgression and sin—to call us children, nay further, to designate us as "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,"—what language could have been used more calculated to win our confidence, and to inspire within our

hearts an overflowing and unalterable attachment and love ?

“ Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” “ Now we behold him through a glass darkly, but then face to face.” To be with One, both a Prince and a Saviour, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him, is not only an assurance that the righteous shall be admitted into the bowers of unfading felicity, and approach the light of Deity, but that they shall behold its utmost splendour ; not only that they shall surround the throne of Almighty Goodness, but be endued with the divine perfections of Him who sitteth thereon.

With such exalted expectations, requiring no sacrifice which does not equally promote our present enjoyment, and fit us for the inheritance which has been attempted to be portrayed ; how depraved and seared must be the will and conscience, and how desperately wicked the heart, that can forego the realization of such glorious hopes ; that can withstand promises of such transcendent importance, and so graciously propounded ! Had the Almighty required of us some gigantic effort, and we really believed in his proffered mercy and reconciliation, would we not

have made an effort for its attainment?—how much more ought we to do so when the simple terms upon which they are offered are comprehended within the short sentence—“wash and be clean.”

But it is the long-continued practice of sin and slavery which constitutes a large portion of the difficulty of forsaking them. Like any of the physical ailments of the body, the longer they are allowed to spread, the more immedicable do they become. Yet, though the taint be more difficult to extract in either case from long propagation; in that of the soul too often does the fatal gangrene inspire no wish for its removal, but, on the contrary, a callousness which is the most fearful indication of its final ruin.

What dire unbelief must be centred in an epidemic at once so poisonous and so deceptive! How must the human mind have been steeped therein, ere it could have received so deep a tinge of moral depravity, or could cling to a delusion fatal to its present welfare and every future prospect! With heaven and earth, reason and conscience, nature and revelation, history and experience—all bearing testimony to divine truth, and opposed to infidelity; how great must have been the enmity to God engendered by sin, how subtle the venom instilled into man's nature through Satan's malignity! How doubly great

must man's transgression appear, when it is remembered that no less exalted a person than the only Son of the Father was adequate to our redemption, and that it was by that divine Saviour's blood alone the enmity was slain, and man's deliverance consummated.

Ours, therefore, will be the fault, and ours the loss, should we neglect to avail ourselves of the fountain offered for sin and uncleanness. Through Christ Jesus, by whose stripes alone we are healed, is this salvation freely vouchsafed to every descendant of the original transgressor—seeing that all, together with him have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Let us not then commit the dreadful enormity of trampling under foot the Son of God, but thankfully accept and gratefully prize His offer, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.

Looking to the varied assurances of loving-kindness and tender mercy which have been extracted from the sacred Scriptures, and herein enumerated, it is repeated that not only have we a largeness of information on which to found a judgment of the joys of heaven, and of the things which Almighty Wisdom has prepared for his people, but amply sufficient for all man's present purposes. When the Lord shall destroy as he has

said by the mouth of his prophet he will, "In this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations when he will swallow up death in victory," then will our renovated nature at once be made capable of understanding and of enjoying all that we now perceive in faint perspective, or descry with the feebleness of human infirmity.—"And it shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

In the mean while, to know that the Almighty God and Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting, will be always present, sustaining his people through countless ages of happiness; and that the ever-blessed Son, the brightness of that Father's glory, and the express image of His person; together with the Holy Ghost—"the Spirit of Truth, and Comforter," proceeding from the Father and the Son;—to know that this divine assemblage of Deity shall individually and in their embodied character uphold throughout eternity the government of the universe, is surely cause for present thankfulness, praise, and gladness. To have the sure and certain hope of participating in all the glories of the Creator—the ineffable love of the Redeemer—and the purifying

influences of the Sanctifier, may well fill every human heart with joy, and every tongue with praise and adoration.

That the angels of God derive their highest gratification and supreme delight in praising heaven's supernal King, is authenticated in the volume of revealed truth, and that just men made perfect will also ascribe their chiefest pleasure to the exercise of an untiring gratitude, may well be imagined. Throughout unnumbered ages, theirs will be the glad employment to cast their crowns in fervent veneration and affection before the Holy One, who sitteth upon the throne and before the Lamb, lost in wonder, love, and praise. Strange indeed would it appear even to reason, could it be otherwise—seeing that we have been redeemed to God and the Lamb ; have been reserved from death ; and have obtained eternal salvation through his blood, who gave himself a ransom for many.

Well, therefore, may all his saints praise him, and esteem it not only their bounden duty and grateful return, but their highest privilege, to be permitted so to hymn his praise, who is God over all from the beginning. Every principle of interest, esteem, gratitude, veneration, and pleasure, calls aloud for all the praise that men or angels can express, seeing that He to whom it belongs

and is offered, is one so exalted and so excellent. But of man more especially is this the case. If the four-and-twenty elders, sitting clothed in white raiment, fell down in humble abasement before Him that sat upon the throne, and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever—casting their crowns before Him,—well may they who have been redeemed out of every kindred and tongue, prostrate themselves at his footstool, and join in the strain which those are described in Revelation as employing—or mingle with the apostle in ascribing unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, honour and glory for ever and ever.

Yes, in praising Him who alone is just and good, and in his own right comprehendeth and weigheth the counsels of the universe, well may men and seraphs join. Gladly may “angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, laud and magnify his glorious name;” who rideth on the heavens as it were an horse, whose name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth. “Let heaven and earth praise him, the sea and all that is therein—for he spake and they were made, he commanded and they stood fast.” “Sing, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth: for the Lord hath visited and redeemed his people.” He hath not given us up to the will of our enemies,

but hath cast their bonds from us. Manifold as were the inventions of the "accuser of our brethren," and deadly as was his hatred, the Lord hath been all-sufficient in the hour of need, and hath accomplished our deliverance, for which we may well be glad and rejoice. "Let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity."

Numerous as are the images, and surpassingly beautiful as are the descriptions interspersed throughout the whole of Scripture, illustrative of the feelings and terms in which the overpourings of gratitude show themselves amid the celestial family, it may well be imagined that there is an obtuseness pervading finite minds, which cannot either understand or appreciate such exalted subjects. Amid all the difficulties connected with the lofty subject on which it has been essayed to write, nowhere are they more perceptible than when the attempt is made to describe adequately the intense feelings of delight and rapture with which angels now, and glorified spirits hereafter, shall join in adoration of the Triune Jehovah. When man's immortal part shall have entered into the most holy place; shall have passed the vail, and seen God face to face; shall have been

admitted to an immediate perception of all the divine glory and exaltation ; then indeed shall man's enraptured spirit be enabled worthily to tune his praise ; then, and never till then, shall he be able to understand the full force and sublimity of those fervent aspirations, shadowed forth so powerfully in Scripture, though necessarily, in dimly refracted and indistinct perspective.

Like as the morning sun, ere yet his disc has scaled the visible horizon, is only dimly recognised by the lustre of his rays ; so we can but darkly appreciate, as through a glass, the dawn of that eternal day whose noontide beam were much too dazzling bright for mortal eye. Yet, although we cannot fully scan the vestibule of such enjoyments—we may, as has herein been attempted, faintly discern several of its distinctive features, and decipher much of what it has been presumed to characterise as its details. To attempt to raise the understanding to a level with the whole theme, were indeed to be guilty of the grossest ignorance and unmitigated arrogance. All that is left to man, or becomes him, is to wait the great teacher death, as a popular poet has it, and God adore. We are unfurnished with any intellectual scale by which to measure infinity, any chart, save the Redeemer's history, by which to trace

perfect holiness, or any plummet by which to fathom almighty power. Still a mirror has been graciously presented, in which perfect obedience and righteousness are reflected; wherein types, symbols, and parables of surpassing beauty and force, and eminently calculated to arrest the attention and rivet our regard, are set forth to portray the indestructible pleasures of heaven. In Christ Jesus, everything calculated to win the assent of man's better judgment, and to secure the affections of the incorrupt heart, has been realized and embodied—together with every manifestation of the Deity which his errand of mercy to a ruined world permitted him to display.

CHAPTER V.

AND now we would offer a word or two as to the probable period when all that our eyes behold, shall for ever be removed out of its place, and eternity shall succeed—when “the angel which the beloved apostle saw in a vision stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, and which lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.”

That the hour when all these things shall be accomplished, is known to no one “save the Father only,” we have the unequivocal declaration of Scripture. Yet Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness dwelt, has himself acquainted us with the signs of his coming, and of the end of the world.

In Luke xxi. 25, 28, is found the following prophetic announcement. "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

Now if the whole of this sublime and remarkable text be scrutinized, and the general plan of prophecy be borne in mind, it would seem as if the present age bore no very distant resemblance to the "beginning" of the times herein prefigured. Nay more, it can hardly be disputed that there is a most striking agreement with the whole prophetic narrative. The passage has sometimes been referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, and doubtless not without good reason. In the whole history of the children of Israel, there is a striking symbolical resemblance to the Church of Christ, from the rearing of the altar on which Abraham was called to sacrifice his only son, to the destruction of the holy city. And, therefore, in common with many other remarkable

passages, the one in question has also a twofold application. To the consummation and final application of the prophecy, however, and to that view of the subject exclusively, it is now intended to invite attention.

That the bulk of mankind should not recognise prognostications though palpable, is not to be wondered at. "As it was in the days of Noah, so also shall it be at the coming of the Son of man," we are expressly warned to expect will be the case. And therefore, because the tokens pass away unregarded, is by no means any proof that they have not occurred, and are occurring. In every period of the world there have been those with eyes who saw not, and those with ears who heard not. At the time of the Messiah's first advent, there was the utmost disinclination to believe anything which related to him in that character. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. The people were offended at his outward want of dignity, at his lowly parentage, and at his unpretending simplicity. Like the whole race of man, they could not disconnect moral worth from extrinsic appendages—nay, could not even disunite supernal power from the poor pre-eminences which distinguish men from each other. Yet there was some slight resemblance in the period immediately preceding the birth of

our Lord to that of our own time. There was a general expectation of some great event. The coming of the Deliverer was looked for, and with longing expectation, although, when he appeared, the people "hid as it were their faces from him."

The Jews looked forward to their being reinstated in temporal dominion at the period in question—to their nation being restored to its original power and authority, if not even to a more distinguished situation than it had ever before occupied. And at this moment are not millions in Christendom looking forward to a renovated state of society as hopeless, it is to be feared, as the expectations of the Jews were proved to be groundless. That the real event of our Saviour's incarnation led to the most important and most glorious consequences—to no less than the spread of the everlasting Gospel, and the reconciliation of man with his Maker, is certain; but that which the Jews looked forward to—the restoration of their national importance—not only was not fulfilled, but the very opposite resulted. The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts was let out to other husbandmen, and the Jewish nation was broken up and dispersed to the four winds of heaven!

And so, it may be feared, will the expectations of many at the present day terminate. There

seems an idea abroad, that the world is but in its infancy as regards science and art, if not in respect of every species of human knowledge ; and that ages of superior intelligence, freedom, and enjoyment, are in store for the race hereafter to be born. Alas ! it is to be feared such persons are but puffed up with their own vain imaginings, and have not considerably weighed the grounds upon which they rear their superstructure. Their very precipitancy betrays them : for, amid all this assumed march of intelligence, there is a feverish restlessness and anxiety, which betokens anything rather than either happiness or sound wisdom. The philosophy which is in fashion, while it has professed much, has yet added nothing to the sum of human comfort. Nay, so far from this having been the case, it must be admitted that all her propositions have been belied by facts, and all her philanthropic intentions cut short by the veriest selfishness. Liberality, whether applied to politics or to trade, has proved a signal failure. The latter, which, conducted on safe principles, ought to have been the right arm of our strength, has become enfeebled through mismanagement ; and the former, which the lapse of ages hitherto had never once endangered—even moderate men now perceive to be in the most imminent peril.

However, this is a digression unworthy of the subject under consideration. We cannot help observing, nevertheless, that it is not an isolated, but a common remark, that we are upon the eve of great changes, and that it is impossible that things should go on as they are at present. Throughout the whole of Europe, and in every portion of the globe, a conflict is going on between the powers that heretofore have borne rule, and the people; and well will it be for the latter, if they come out of the encounter unscathed. In looking at theoretic rights, it is greatly to be feared they have lost sight of immutable principles and sound maxims, and that in the long-run they themselves will be the greatest sufferers. The balance of the sanctuary, it is to be deplored, is thrown aside, and mere human wisdom substituted. As the prophet Jeremiah wrote concerning the children of Israel in his day, so it is to be feared might it be written now. "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

But let us scrutinize the passage before alluded to more fully, and in regular order. As was said, it is a most remarkable one, and well worthy attention. First, it is said that there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.

Now it is by no means intended to rest the implied completion of the prophecy upon this single member of the passage, and for this reason, among others which might be mentioned, that the words admit both of a literal and symbolical meaning, as is often the case with regard to the prophetic writings. Yet, even taken in their literal sense, we cannot help thinking that something like their verification has occurred. It is quite true, whatever appearances have occurred amid the heavenly bodies, or whatever other celebrated phenomena have been observed, have all moved on in the ordinary course of nature. Still their conjunction, or rather their frequency of appearance, has been remarkable.

It is not necessary to go into every particular which might be adduced to establish the position in question ; enough will have been noticed under this head, if one or two of the most striking celestial " signs " which have lately appeared be pointed out. Among these, Halley's comet, and the annular eclipse of the sun which appeared almost immediately afterwards, may be mentioned, together with other remarkable eclipses which contemporaneously have taken place in another hemisphere. Individually, indeed, these might not be worthy of being regarded as portentous ; but collectively they are not to be overlooked.

Even the extraordinary and multitudinous spots which were observed upon the sun's disc, and the very remarkable display of the northern lights which appeared in the autumn of the present year (1839,) and which were noticed in the public prints at the time, may be regarded as among the minor celestial signs deserving of being noticed.

All such phenomena, it may be said, are the result of fixed laws, and, humanly speaking, unquestionably such they are. But because they recur at stated intervals, and with the most minute accuracy, are they the less to be regarded as signs? Neither a sign nor a miracle is the less to be estimated as such, although we have been allowed to arrive at such a state of knowledge that we can partially comprehend some of the movements connected therewith, or can trace a correspondence and affinity between certain bodies or substances. Any acquaintance we have of the heavenly bodies, or any knowledge we possess of the influences exerted over any portion of the material world, can no more either hasten or restrain those influences, than if we were in utter ignorance as to their nature and qualities.

Besides, it is ever to be borne in mind, when reasoning upon such subjects, that what is very clear and perspicuous to an intelligent people,

may be very obscure to others, and to the majority of mankind. The Jews, to whom the prediction was spoken, had not arrived at the same astronomical skill to which we have attained; and both with respect to them and others, that which we regard with so much philosophic self-complacency, may by them be very differently interpreted. The Bible, it is again and again to be remembered, was written for all times, countries and classes. The language therefore throughout employed is popular and simple, claiming attention from the innate dignity of its statements and doctrines, not from any hypercritical exactness.

However, we pass on to other prognostications, not wishing to attach more importance to those already alluded to, than what they will strictly bear. To what follows, more particular attention is claimed. After the words already remarked upon, the prophecy goes on to state, "And upon the earth there shall be distress of nations, with perplexity." To a common observer of this portion of the text, it might seem as if one idea only were embodied in the passage, but it will be otherwise judged of by those who are more conversant with the business of the world, and better qualified to compare the real state of society with the several members of this significant and interesting sentence.

As to the distress of nations spoken of ; are not France, and Spain, and Belgium, and Ireland, and Canada, and the United States, and even once happy England, with divers other countries in every quarter of the globe, not only distressed, but distracted in a manner such as they never were before. Mere politicians may fancy that there is nothing in all this but what their penetration can fathom, and that they see in it the rising genius of liberty and independence. Alas, they miserably deceive themselves ! There are principles at work which they cannot comprehend, and which, it is believed, are destined to lay their proudest theories in the dust. It may be otherwise, but so far from the amelioration of mankind being at all likely to be the result of their projects, extensive degradation is, humanly speaking, all but inevitable. Like as the taskmasters of Egypt, however, were the proximate cause of the deliverance of Israel from their cruel bondage ; so, after the vials of wrath have been poured out on a guilty land, the thunders and lightnings may cease, and blessedness spring up, where all before was doubt and dismay. For the transgressions of a land many, we read, are the princes thereof, a passage containing more of philosophy within its compass, than modern political economy could ever furnish. Yet neither prince nor people are

to be condemned as such, but simply to the extent that each have sinned. It is the fashion of the times to suppose that all virtue and also all majesty rest with the people, and that all their opposites belong exclusively to the great and the noble. This is the germ from whence Democracy has shot up its hydra head with such precipitancy. But the assumption is false. It is not the vice of one class, but of all classes, which has brought the world to its present critical position; and as the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh was the instrument, under God, of first plaguing the children of Israel, and afterwards forwarding their rescue; so in another period of the world, and under a different combination of circumstances, it may be that the perverse ignorance of the multitude may be overruled to the lasting benefit of the people of God—to those who are not of the seed of Abraham after the flesh, but who are counted for the seed.

That there is a great war of opinions as to forms of government going on in the world, is palpable. Throughout almost every country which has just been named, it is distinctly to be recognised. Legitimate authority seems to be trembling in the scales, and lawless anarchy on the very point of bursting the mounds which heretofore confined the overflowings of ungodly and deluded men. Like

an over-freighted or leaky vessel in a storm, which with difficulty can be made to obey the helm, even Britain herself, once the arbiter of nations, and with whose destiny the welfare of the world seemed bound up, is in the utmost jeopardy—her church, her constitution, and her hoarded wealth, being all threatened with subversion or ruin.

That perplexity pervades her councils, her commerce, her agriculture, and her banking transactions, is best known to those who are most deeply versed and experienced in all those various occupations. The premature death of several of Britain's statesmen can explain the deep perplexity which has brooded over our national affairs; and the rude shocks which have assailed from time to time all the leading interests of the country, bear melancholy testimony to the fact, that although, upon the surface, all wears the semblance of prosperity, there is an under current of national privation silently but surely sapping the most substantial establishments, and ever and anon, as if for the purpose of affording timely warning, precipitating whole masses into bankruptcy and ruin.

At no period of the world was the state of society so artificial, or so accessible to convulsion, as it is in Britain at this moment. It is a lament-

able fact for themselves, no less than for the country, that they whose eventual prosperity depends upon a thorough acquaintance with the causes which have led to this morbid state, are as ignorant thereof as they are of its inevitable consequences—that is, as to its issues, humanly considered. Although perplexity has been spreading and advancing during the last quarter of a century, no man of any eminence seems yet fairly to have turned the current of his thoughts to the real causes of our national decay. Certainly no statesman—great as is the field for display—has yet taken up a commanding and proper position. The result has been, that unexampled embarrassment, has invaded every British interest; and with the word “intelligence” reverberating from every tongue—not only are the finances of the state, but those of every individual, involved in unexampled discordance and perplexity.

These observations, however just, are not intended to convey a reproach upon either British statesmen, or any other individuals connected with the leading interests of the country. The advancement in mechanical skill, and the facilities thence derived for producing wealth, have been so gigantic, and have occurred so rapidly, that to charge any of those parties with intentional neglect, or even with dereliction of duty, were

altogether unjustifiable. A state of society such as never before existed, has palpably arisen. Well, therefore, may all that has heretofore been accounted philosophy, for a time have been baffled. Had the ocean suddenly overrun some province of the empire, could human sagacity have been otherwise than disconcerted? And seeing what the inventive genius of the age has accomplished, ought it to be any impeachment of the skill of British statesmen, if, amid the mighty strife of interests which has been going on, they as yet have been unable to do more than guide the helm of affairs amidst such a sea of difficulty?

It must be self-evident, however, that in a wealthy land, the DIFFUSION of wealth ought to have been a matter of primary consideration. Yet, amid all the volumes with which the press has teemed, strange to say, no one has ever yet propounded, or even attempted to propound, a remedy for the existing unnatural tendency of society; or, prompted by true patriotism, ventured effectively to condemn a system of currency and international policy, which violate the very rudiments of all sound philosophy!

There can be no question that astounding difficulties are to be encountered—and therefore is it that public men ought not to be too rashly condemned. Those who entertain high but unscript-

tural notions of the dignity of man, may overlook the moral obstacles which pervade all such questions ; but others, equally clear-sighted in all matters of human wisdom, and infinitely better instructed as to the great truths upon which human happiness rests, see the matter in a very different light, and are ready to make every allowance for the seeming oversights of statesmen, at once harassed with unnumbered cares, and borne down by unmerited popular mistrust.

What the text under consideration next states of the sea and the waves roaring, in some degree is comprehended in the portion of the sentence already considered—namely, in the distress of nations. Yet in some respects the meaning is different. Hitherto national distress has proceeded more from the despotic and unrestrained tempers of princes, hurrying them and their subjects into not only needless, but ruinous wars. But widely different principles are now in operation. The distress alluded to has penetrated to the very vitals of Britain herself, and through her to every country with which she is connected. With such paralysing effect has this deep-seated distress set in upon her, and some of her commercial neighbours, that the probability seems that instead of kings warring with each other as heretofore, they will have to contend hereafter with

the sovereignty of "the people,"—their subjects. And this new feature, it would seem, has not occurred because princes are more depraved now than formerly, but because a spirit of pride has insinuated itself extensively into every grade of society—a species of pride alike irreconcilable with moral rectitude and philosophical truth; to say nothing of its offensiveness to Almighty God, or its opposition to the entire principles of that book which has declared that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

In common with much that is figuratively conveyed in Scripture, the words in question—"the sea and the waves roaring," are usually considered by commentators as referring to the great body of the people under violent excitement. And like the multitudinous waves of ocean when vexed and agitated by a tempest, are not the popular billows tossing and foaming everywhere? Where can we look, and not perceive their heavings? Even in once happy England, is not democracy at this very moment dashing its terrific surge with all the violence of an impending hurricane, and attempting to overthrow the existing state of things—and to erect itself on the ruins of monarchy? The fact is too notorious to be disputed; and whatever may be the result, which God alone can foresee, certain it is that the probabilities:

(humanly speaking) are only for evil. Men there are who affect to have drunk deep of philosophy, we are well aware, who hold a directly contrary opinion; but their doctrines are at once so incompatible with each other, so irreconcilable with the divine truths of Christianity, and so unsupported by facts or by any beneficial result, that we must either dispute their sincerity, or condemn their judgment.

After the sections of the text already noticed, follow the words, "men's hearts failing them for fear of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." On this part of the passage it will not be requisite to enlarge. It may be enough to remark, that the feeling of despondency herein narrated seems to be the natural consequence of the antecedent portion of the prophecy; and in accordance therewith we find the whole chain of circumstances as they are actually taking place. Distress, perplexity, and agitation, in their most aggravated forms, have all succeeded in quick succession, and, as a necessary sequel, foreboding and doubt have been almost universally engendered. The powers of heaven—that is all which heretofore was considered as lawful authority—have been shaken, and men's hearts have thence failed them for fear of those things which are

coming on the earth. There is a fitness, and minute agreement with what is passing before our eyes in these words, which is remarkable. It is a common remark, and borne out by the fact, that men's eyes are in the ends of the earth to sell and get gain, not in a spirit of beneficence, though liberality be the profession of the age, but in that of a money-making and labour-underpaying selfishness. Yet, amid all this eagerness for wealth, there ever and anon comes a spirit of distrust and doubt as to its stability or security ; and while the hardships of the people are yearly increasing, and the waves of their discontent rolling mountains high, well may disquietude and uneasiness preponderate.

Lastly, it is added, in the remarkable text on which we write, " for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."—From all that is going on in the world, had we not a better guide than reason, apprehensions might well be entertained not only that the powers here spoken of should be shaken, but that they should be absolutely undermined and thrown down. The passage before us, however, simply states that the powers of heaven shall be shaken ; and therefore, although the people have raged and swelled, and still continue their perturbation and " roaring," we have the best grounds for believing that He who said to the

troubled sea in the days of his flesh, "Peace, be still," will yet control the unruly mind of the multitude, and uphold the authority which He himself has ordained.—As far, however, as the prophecy is concerned, is there not abundant testimony to show, that it is in the course of fulfilment? Have not thrones upon thrones been shaken, and are not more tottering? Let the disorganized state of Europe throughout the present century, answer the question.

Throughout the whole passage which has been considered, there is a palpable agreement with what is actually passing in the world, such as never before occurred. To all alike, indeed, it may not be equally palpable. Great as are the pretences put forward to elucidate the great social and political questions which are agitating men's minds, few indeed are the number, who have the requisites for their full comprehension. Yet, amid all the complexity and turmoil which is prevalent, those who are most conversant with the real bearings of the subject, can best appreciate the minute and striking agreement between the state of the world and the prophecy which has been quoted.

In another part of the New Testament it is said—treating of the same subject, that "there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of

sorrows." (Matt. xxiv. 7, 8.) In reference to this, it cannot in a literal sense be affirmed that famines have prevailed—at least in this portion of the globe; but that pestilences of a very fearful character have traversed whole continents, and depopulated both this and every country whither they were permitted to direct their course, cannot but be in the recollection of every one.

As far as regards earthquakes, there have been at least three different visitations, all of which may very legitimately be classed under this head: namely, those which are usually accounted—and are literally such; secondly, great moral eruptions, such as was the French revolution; and thirdly the great monied convulsions of 1825 and 1836. The first named, and of which there have been memorable instances of late years, are undoubtedly among the most awful inflictions with which mankind are visited. Yet, terrible as they are, it is questionable whether the other disruptions are not even more to be dreaded. However impending and immediate may have been the desolation and havoc of the former, they seldom last long, or have caused the extensive and long-continued mischiefs of the other. It is now half a century since the first French revolution burst forth, and can it with any justice be denied that the people, to promote whose amelioration it was brought

about, at this moment are suffering from its pestiferous influences? The principles of that fell revolution are even now vibrating throughout the kingdoms of Europe in a far more destructive manner than any earthquake upon record. Any heavings of the latter, however appalling for the time, left nature and man's moral feeling equally uncontaminated. The concussion once ended—all moved on again in pristine harmony. But not so, as respects the revolution alluded to. So great was the blight to human happiness induced thereby, that neither the face of nature nor man's buoyancy of mind after the shock, wore the same aspect they had done before—but for years were oppressed or unenjoyed.

The same observation equally applies to the two commercial panics which have been named. The derangement caused even by the first of those ruinous interruptions to commerce, is not yet repaired; and whether either that or the subsequent one shall have spent their fury, or be surmounted, ere another shock take the country by surprise, is more than the sagest of British merchants, or her profoundest financiers, can take upon themselves to assert. They who are best enabled to come to a sound judgment upon the question are not without their fears. From some undiscovered and perplexed cause or causes, the

fundamental principles upon which society ought to be established—that of mutual support—have evidently been infringed upon ; and when that is the case, moral earthquakes, such as have been mentioned, are continually to be dreaded. Wisdom has declared, that “the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand”—an aphorism equally applicable to individuals and to communities, and one containing more real philosophy than whole volumes which have been written by men professing liberality, but who, unfortunately for their country, never were acquainted with anything but the mere name.

While mock-philosophy has been glorying in her achievements, and science laudably employed in collecting from every possible source materials to enable us to act in a truly liberal spirit at home, as well as abroad,—for abroad we have been most liberal,—the philanthropic spirit of doing justice to native industry has been wanting. In our fancied intellectual prowess and self-sufficiency, we have overlooked at one and the same time the very rudiments of social amelioration and monied security, and by so doing have endangered the very stability of our national institutions, and made shipwreck of our numerous advantages.

Who then shall presume to say, that with such portentous signs passing before our eyes, there is not very much to warn mankind, that the fulfilment of the prophecies which have been recited, are not on the eve of accomplishment? Who dare venture indeed to affirm, that the time is not fast approaching, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Be this as it may, He who has Himself assured the world of his again appearing in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, has also cautioned the world against being taken by surprise; and seeing that his coming will be like a thief in the night—hath enjoined them to watch. "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh; whether at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning."

Though the signs of the coming of the Son of man should not turn out to be those to which allusion has been made, and that protracted generations should yet swell the annals of human kind; ought either time or place greatly to agitate those, whose high privilege it is, to hold communion with the Governor of the universe? Although they are not able fully to estimate or appreciate the extent of what is reserved for the

righteous in heaven, or to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him; yet every exalted pleasure Christ Jesus purchased with his blood for his ransomed followers, shall surely burst upon their entranced vision. With all the reflected benignity of the Father in and around them, securing from all present danger, and fitting them for the enjoyment of his presence; who shall separate such from the love of Christ?—" Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" " I am persuaded," writes the apostle of the Gentiles, " that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Begun now, or ages hence, eternity cannot by possibility be shortened. Illimitable, like everything appertaining to Deity; when myriads of untold centuries shall have passed away, immortality will be but in its earliest infancy! Amazing thought! Well may heaven's joys be incomprehensible to beings such as man, and well may they allure his heart to gratitude and adoration. Wherever we live, or move, or have our being, there (if it be not our own fault) is the throne of God, where at once reside his sovereignty and

his love. We cannot go where he presides not—or, once admitted to his presence, as pilgrims wander more. At home in Abraham's bosom, not only our utmost hopes—but delights surpassing infinitely all they dared aspire unto—will evermore be ours. "We shall then have come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."

CHAPTER VI.

HAVING depicted the several christian graces which are destined one day to ripen into amaranthine flowers and fruits—and also glanced at the signs which shall usher in the great harvest of the world ; it is now intended to offer a few observations on a branch of the subject deeply interesting to numbers, and profitable to all. In speaking of the glories of heaven, as far as the subject has been gone into, no mention has been made of the meeting of friends, and probably this may have been set down as an oversight. Such, however, it has not been. The subject has been deferred, and not put prominently forward, for two reasons. First, because different opinions are entertained upon the question ; and secondly, because it was thought better to treat of it apart from all other topics. It will be for Christians

to reason upon the subject, with all the intelligence and reflected light of revelation, which circumstances will allow them to exercise. For himself, the writer cannot bring himself to think otherwise, than that too much importance in general is attached to the question—and that the happiness to be derived from such renewed unions is unduly rated. His reasonings, as drawn from the word of God upon this popular theme, are as follow.

Upon earth, it has been wisely ordered, that particular affections and bonds in relationship should not only prevail, but be carefully cherished. But in heaven, we have been expressly told, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God. On this topic we should be loath to utter a syllable calculated to wound one human affection—to disparage one praiseworthy earthly attachment—to undermine a single humane disposition—or to break a link in the social chain which with so much beauty and instinctive precision has been wound around the heart of each occupant of earth. But when the whole subject is considered, and the immense gain contemplated, which will succeed to these sublunary feelings, certain it is, that not only ought all discomfort to vanish, but joy unspeakable and full of glory to

supervene. As mists disappear before the warmth and radiance of the morning sun, so ought the fogs of earth, and a mental incapacity to judge rightly of celestial matters, to disperse before the Sun of Righteousness which has arisen with healing in his wings.

Want of due consideration, and, as has been observed, an undue preference of worldly joys, alone lead men to overlook or under-estimate the high principles which will cement and influence those happy abodes, where pleasures infinite and immortal reign. Instead of depreciating as they ought what is of earth, these false reasoners would disparage the delights of heaven—and, with such a perversion of vision, well may the peculiar excellencies of the latter be lost sight of. Regardless of the proofs of almighty power within and around them; like as the Upas tree is said to scatter death over all beneath its shade; so the unconquerable practical disbelief rioting in this lower world, leads men to judge of divine things according to the false standard which a distempered imagination has substituted for truth. Had the creature never fallen, it were bad enough that he should so judge of his Creator; but that a being utterly undone should presume to liken a world placed under Heaven's ban for his own

misdoings, to those mansions where all the God-head is unfolded, does indeed betray matchless arrogance and ignorance.

That just men made perfect will not recognise each other in the world to come, is improbable. As subjects of an omniscient Sovereign, the idea can hardly be separated from every association the mind has formed. But that the circumstance will constitute either their chief delight, or anything bordering thereon, is a position too preposterous for reason to entertain—derogatory to the claims of Deity—and to the last degree opposed to revelation. Nay, further, such opinion, however common, is not only unscriptural, but idolatrous in the most offensive sense—as tending to introduce idolatry into the very presence of supernal blessedness. Upon earth, we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—however poor human nature may have failed in complying with the injunction: but surely, if we believe the promises, and look forward to the time when the spirit, unbowed down by the body, shall be made like its Creator; the unworthiness—the utter unworthiness—of all such carnal considerations must be apparent.

No, no, the chief excellence of heaven will not consist of anything its occupants will either bring or copy from earth, but from feelings infinitely holier,

loftier, and happier. We learn from the inimitable writings of St. Paul, that "there are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." The difference between the finite happiness of earth, and the infinite happiness of heaven, will be as strongly contrasted as is the fixedness of the one to the precariousness of the other, or the dream-like transitoriness of this life to the eternal duration of that which is to come. The chief happiness of heaven will not consist of anything of a finite origin, but in the beholding, loving, and holding fellowship with those who are infinitely wise, holy, and happy.

Whether parents hereafter will recognise their offspring, or families their different members—as far as immortal beings are concerned, ought to be of small moment; although it may now strike the creatures of an hour with being of paramount interest. If there are some things in holy writ to favour the doctrine, assuredly there are others equally cogent in opposition thereto. Could mere reason be supposed an arbiter in the matter, the admission of such a doctrine carried to its full extent would leave a point wholly inexplicable, since human sagacity would in vain attempt to draw a line between the feelings of sorrow and joy which might be expected to be participated

in by the inheritors of heaven, were aught of the leaven of this world to be perpetuated therein. It is quite clear that reason has only to do with the matter now : hereafter the intelligence with which the inhabitants of heaven shall be endowed, will infinitely outshine all that can be imagined of the loftiest minds which have adorned humanity. But taking reason for our present monitor, the unconditional surrender must at least be made, that no painful recollections or feelings by any possibility can be supposed to intrude themselves into the heavenly Jerusalem—to damp the serenity of its society. But can reason, while she would appropriate a portion of the poor fleeting joys of earth, explain how its sorrow and feelings of an opposite character are to be excluded?—She cannot: and therefore it is incumbent upon Christians to reflect how they attach undue importance to opinions, which revelation has given very little countenance unto, and which reason herself cannot *with consistency* approve.

As respects the darker bearings of this view of the subject; even now nothing can be of more painful interest than the uncertainty, as far as human knowledge is concerned, which hangs over the destiny of friends—it may be of such as we have dearly loved—who have departed this life, it is to be dreaded, without due preparation. But

how fearfully would that sorrow be increased—if permitted at all—could the doctrine of future recognitions, in the sense assumed, be rendered consistent and undoubted. When that which is now uncertain should have become fully known, how would our joy be obscured, were heaven accessible to the same fitful reminiscences and inroads of which everything on earth is compounded !

Looking at the subject in this point of view, can it be considered an unfair construction to put upon the words—“there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ;” to suppose that they not only refer to corporeal, but to mental pain ; not to sorrow alone, but to its sources. When the disencumbered spirit shall have winged its flight to the regions of the blessed, it would seem as if mental pain, even to human apprehension, was all that by possibility could exist. And since the promise has been given by Him who cannot recede from his declarations, that pain and crying shall hereafter for ever cease ; the unscriptural character of a doctrine to which it is to be feared too many idolatrously cling, need not further be insisted on—except for the purpose of extracting those passages in holy writ which have a specific bearing on the subject.

To wish to be wise beyond what is written in

the word of God, is a disposition of mind which cannot be too much deprecated ; but, on the other hand, to have a reason for the hope that is in us, is specifically enjoined by one of its inspired writers. Then only shall we be guilty of abusing the privilege, when we presumptuously endeavour to explain what God in infinite wisdom has seen fit to withhold. To wish to know something of the kingdom to which we all profess to be travelling—its privileges, primary pursuits, and general associations,—is not only an allowable but a laudable curiosity, and proves us to be in earnest. If any thing more than another could throw discredit on the promised land, it would be the false assumptions of those who, professing a regard for that spiritual Canaan, seem utterly bewildered as to the claim it has upon their affections, and the false reports which specious theologians would disseminate as to the spiritual destitution of that blissful country.

As illustrating a passage of Scripture bearing strictly upon the topic about to be discussed, viz. “that former things are passed away, and all things are become new,” among other confirmatory texts, attention may first be called to the very remarkable one where a question is put by the Sadducees (Mark xii. 19, &c.) to our Lord, embracing the very point at issue.—Seven brothers

in succession, we read, had been united by the nearest and dearest of earthly ties to the same woman. In the resurrection, therefore, it was asked of the Saviour by those disbelievers, whose wife of the seven the woman would be. To which interrogatory our Lord replied, with that fulness of wisdom and comprehensiveness by which his answers were invariably characterised, in the following memorable words. "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God; for in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." They who from long usage and a familiarity with this world cannot elevate their thoughts beyond this visible diurnal sphere—cannot even command a glimpse of the land of promise, may think the answer in question inconclusive. But there is a yet fuller refutation of this earthly-minded doctrine; for triumphing over the unbelieving propounders of the question, our Lord goes on to say; "but as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Here, then, an entirely new light breaks in upon the subject. That which too many are apt to

overlook, is here in all its clearness developed. At this very moment not only are those three illustrious patriarchs, but all others who have since departed this life, existing, although we know neither their mode of being nor their employment. Whatever they may know of us, we know nothing of them. Whatever intercourse they may have with one another, with those who, it may be, once loved and admired them, no further interchange or mutual communication exists. The father of the faithful hath long since ceased from his labours, and seeing that in this life he hesitated not to offer up his only son, doubtless every succeeding believer admitted into the promised inheritance, and to whom, as well as to Isaac, the prophecy appertained, hath from him received a holier welcome than ever was made to any of his family on earth.

To most minds the answer given by our Lord to the Sadducees must appear conclusive, as it would not seem to afford the slightest sanction even to a constructive modification of the doctrine of family recognitions, much less to an admission thereof, to the extent generally claimed. It at once repudiates every notion of similarity in the circumstances of the two states of being, and vindicates the supremacy of God's power. Nay, it seems to exclude all those finer and more amiable

feelings, which after all, by comparison, are mere earthly prepossessions and frailties—weaknesses by which heaven would be contaminated and the glories of infinite happiness defaced.

This, however, is not the only passage of Scripture bearing upon the subject in the strictest possible sense. The following apt and exquisitely beautiful allusion and illustration of the question is to be met with in Matt. xii. 47 to 50 :—" Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother."

Now there is a twofold application to be made from this singularly emphatic demonstration of benevolence by the Redeemer of mankind, to our present subject. The first and most obvious fact which the passage discloses, is, that while he was upon earth, the incarnate Jehovah esteemed his spiritual relationship with his disciples and followers of the highest possible account. Since the various relationships of brother, sister, and mother, have all been blended into one, that full effect

might be given to that fervency of affection which was intended to be conveyed; nothing can be clearer than that such was our Lord's meaning. It is no objection to the truth of this remark, to say that Christ, being God and man, was not bound to his relations by the ties of ordinary men, since we read that "he was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin."

The substantial inference to be drawn from this passage in our Saviour's life is clearly this—that among all such as are spiritually minded, relationships are to be considered of less importance than with the unregenerate; not indeed in a sense that would withdraw any regard or affection claimed of them; quite the contrary—but simply by excluding from the heart every avenue to sin. And this is the reason—that they have become the friends and servants of God, and as such are free from the worldly-mindedness, selfishness, and malignity, commingling with the very best of human affections.

Another deduction to be made from this benevolent enunciation of the Saviour is, that hereafter, when all earthborn cares shall have ceased, every notion of relationship may be expected to resolve itself into one harmonious and comprehensive companionship—one worthy of regard, not from any instinctive or adventitious affinity, such as

prevails upon earth, where the bad equally with the good are associated together upon principles of reciprocation ; but in a league of holy and blessed communion, the intrinsic excellence and purity of which throughout heaven's whole extent—boundless as that will be—shall accord with those of Him whose power and intelligence are infinite, and whose chiefest attribute is love.

The most circumstantial detail of the realities of the future world furnished in Scripture, perhaps, is that contained in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. And unquestionably if there be therein nothing revealed to negative a sentiment replete with carnal associations, and tintured with the grossness of this world, at least much is therein disclosed to weaken an implicit reliance thereon. As far as respects Lazarus, all has a leaning towards a contrary opinion to that which would bring down heaven to a level with our present understandings, not elevate earth to heaven. And to Lazarus's state or condition, and not so much to that of him who had fared sumptuously every day, is our judgment more particularly to be directed.

After the death of the poor afflicted outcast who had lain at the gate of the rich man full of sores, we are told he was carried by angels—his new associates—into Abraham's bosom : an expression

descriptive of complete rest and perfect happiness. One of our most popular writers, in a masterpiece of English versification, embodies something of the same sentiment, where he describes the disembodied state of the soul in the following appropriate and similarly expressive imagery, namely, as "reposing in the bosom of his Father and his God." As respects Lazarus in his new condition, there are no more sores, no more hunger, no anxious cares, no distracting pains, no disturbing solitudes, no soul harrowing disquietudes, to interrupt or mar the perfect happiness of his disenthralled and renovated spirit.

But widely different is the case of the voluptuary who had been his unfeeling contemporary in the probationary and short-lived scene upon earth. He too dies; but instead of any mention being made of the manner of his arrival beyond the intervening gulph which yawned and for ever separated him from the despised Lazarus, or of the mode of his being conveyed to his destined and doleful abode, a thrilling and entire silence is preserved upon the subject. No connecting link, save his burial, which doubtless was distinguished by the same luxurious display that marked his life, prepares us for the dismal sequel—till the announcement at once is made, "And in hell he

lift up his eyes, being in torments !” What an awful illustration of the wilful blindness of men, who, with eyes to see and ears to hear the greatness and loveliness of divine truth, will not avail themselves thereof until it be for ever too late—who will not “ lift up their eyes” till their doom be irrevocable, and the offer of mercy be withdrawn ! However luxury for a time may steel the heart and lull the senses, the impending realities of eternity will one day force conviction—it may be even in this world, when it is too late. Although men may continue to live unbelievers, they seldom or ever die such. The business of life, the frivolities of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may banish reflection for a time, or prevent the stings of conscience from gaining the ascendancy ; but sooner or later that impartial monitor will make itself heard—and in the world to come, we are given to understand, it will be the bitterest ingredient in the cup of woe, and the tormentor of the wicked for ever.

Nothing fraught with more deep misery and unmitigated dismay than is depicted in the recital just adverted to, can by possibility be conjectured. A parallel case, indeed, may be instanced in the parable of the marriage feast, where he who had not on a wedding-garment—through his own neglect, and that entirely, it is to be observed—con-

science-stricken and self-condemned, replies not to the interrogatory put to him by the master of the feast—"Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding-garment?" but was "speechless!"

It has been noticed that in Lazarus's case there was now neither solicitude, care, nor pain. He was in Abraham's bosom, and, being there, was at peace. But how fared it with the rich man; had he no cares or sufferings beyond those by which he was immediately surrounded—no added bitterness to a wounded conscience; the worm which never dies, but without interruption inflames and maddens the sufferer into tenfold misery? Yes, together with the loss of heaven, even in hell he recalls and recurs to that deceitful world, which once exclusively occupied his heart—that world which has steeped him in unutterable woe—and which still maintains an interest in his affections. Though the forfeiture of bliss, and woe interminable, press momentarily and simultaneously upon the agonized spirit, still in his dis-tempered soul the recollections of earth prey with all their former intensity and ruinous prepossession. Cast off for ever from the light of His countenance whose presence is life; the world from which he was so abruptly torn still maintains its empire over the rich man's heart, and revels with

unrelinquished interest in his affections. Nor need this be wondered at. Like as the contrast between this life and life eternal is infinitely in favour of the latter; so bad as this world is, its gloomiest aspect, when compared to hell, is light and joy. The very essence of heaven's supreme delight will be, that there will be no admixture of evil; the very dregs of the cup of misery in hell, that good will for ever be withdrawn from its precincts.

In the case of the rich man under consideration, the portraiture of Britain's immortal bard, in all its deepening woe, is too fatally realised:—

And in the lowest deep, a lower deep
Still threatens to devour him, to which
The hell he suffers seems a heaven.

The retrospective contrast of his former and present condition is precisely the opposite of that of Lazarus. From degradation and poverty the latter has been raised to incomparable wealth—to glory and honour; while the other, from worldly affluence and distinction, has been sunk into the nethermost hell—a prey to every corroding thought, and to the most malignant of earth's bad propensities entailed and engrafted on a nature still more depraved through fell example and bad companionship. Well may occasional yearnings towards

earth from the occupants of hell be indulged in; although the very same reasons which point to such a conclusion, justify the very opposite inference with regard to heaven.

Having been refused even a drop of water to cool his burning tongue, from the utter impossibility of the patriarch's complying with the request, the sufferer's eager prayer to Abraham next is, "that he would have pity on his brethren," and send Lazarus to warn them of their danger, "lest they also come to this place of torment." But this request is also refused, on the ground of its utter uselessness to effect the purpose so implored by the wretched suppliant. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," was the answer given to his entreaties—words ascribed to the patriarch by him who knew what was in man—"neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead:"—an answer applicable, it is to be feared, to all times, and under every variety of circumstances. However specious the desire for miraculous interference may at first sight seem, it is greatly to be doubted that, with man's innate disposition to gratify his desires, reckless of every warning, a miracle equal even to that desired by the rich man in the parable before us, would fail, if not to convince, at least to effect a reformation. If more than the testimony rendered both

by the Law and the Gospel would have proved efficacious in working out man's salvation, doubtless divine love would have had recourse thereto ; but after the death and resurrection of the only Son of God has been carried into actual operation, what other sacrifice or miracle could by possibility prove available where those have failed ?

It would seem, that although the rich man thus retained all *his* former prepossessions and yearning after a world of sin and misery, far otherwise was the case with Lazarus. At least, such is to be inferred from the absence of any mention thereof. Once in Abraham's bosom, it would appear that he had meekly resigned himself into his Father's hands, as unsolicitous about the past, as undisturbed for the future. His warmest feelings—and though a beggar laid at the gate of another, these he probably possessed as warm as any man—together with every earth-born concern, were now all thrown into the shade and subdued, in a region where all was intelligence, glory, and immortality.

In the whole of the foregoing heart-rending narrative—heart-rending as respects the fate of the rich man, and in the others which have been already quoted, there is everything to shake our confidence, but nothing to warrant the belief of a

doctrine unworthy on every account to be placed in the foreground, and utterly disrespectful to that almighty and altogether lovely Being with whom we have to do—and who has justly claimed it of all his creatures, that as their Creator he should have their entire and undivided affection. Provided we do not attach undue importance to the future meeting of friends, the holding of the doctrine may be perfectly harmless. It is in the degree in which it is entertained wherein all the evil consists; and as it is to be feared that many err through misconception and want of due consideration, it is on this ground that the point has thus been mooted, and somewhat warmly if not forcibly maintained. In the succeeding chapter a few more extracts from holy writ, as well as such other arguments as the subject seems to demand, shall be brought forward.

CHAPTER VII.

To judge fairly either of the texts which have been advanced, or of those which are to follow, the entire context ought to be compared ; and not only so—for even then our judgment may be improperly biassed—but various and distinct portions of the sacred volume should be examined. One part of Scripture which appears difficult, ought to be viewed in connexion with others which either treat of the same subject under a different aspect, or with circumstances super-added, calculated to elucidate what is elsewhere obscure.

To interpret the record of divine truth after a very different fashion, and upon entirely different principles, has been too much the practice, and it has led, as was naturally to be expected, to an almost interminable formation of sects. Isolated

passages have been selected, and entire systems of faith founded thereon, regardless of its palpable impropriety, as well as of its incompatibility with the practice usually adopted in common life. It is by no means the usage with men of letters hastily to decide upon the spirit, or to leave anything uninvestigated which may elucidate the opinions, of an author; much less to rest satisfied without making one portion of his writings explain the other, wherever there is a difficulty. And if this be the case, viewing the impropriety in question as simply compared with a language vernacular and in common use, how much does the unfairness swell in amount, when it is considered that the Bible has been translated into an idiom comparatively cold and uncongenial—if such a word may be hazarded. Besides, is any language so perfect, that mistakes do not continually and upon every subject prevail? If it were so, we should not have the discrepancies and mistakes with which the whole of history, profane as well as sacred, is beset.

As bearing upon the subject of future recognitions, another passage in the word of revelation occurs in St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, where that apostle expresses himself in the following remarkable manner. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have

known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." Than this, few things can be considered more clear and convincing. So much is this the case, that to attempt to explain what appears so intelligible would be a work of supererogation. A similar passage (in Revelation) to the latter portion of this quotation has already been adverted to, and unquestionably what is superadded in the above extract by no means tends to invalidate—but rather to confirm all that before was adduced or contended for. In reality, the above expression of St. Paul seems to meet the very point under review, and that so amply and unanswerably that further comment is all but needless.

Taken independently and literally, the apostle's averment would certainly seem to convey the meaning that we are not only called upon to relinquish all carnal lusts, for they are throughout his whole writings proscribed, but to forego all mere fleshly or earthly affections. For it can scarcely be made a matter of doubt, that if Christ after the flesh was to be known no more, he who was all perfection and grace in a sense never before realised ; then the inordinate love of humanity itself, as here intended, should be sub-

dued, if not wholly given up. Not that it is to be understood that the charities of life are to be abandoned, but simply that the old man with his affections and lusts, and everything that estranges from God, should be forsaken and renounced—all of which throughout the entire sacred volume we are enjoined to crucify.

During our Lord's ministration on earth, while addressing the Pharisees upon the subject of divorce, he observed, "For the hardness of your hearts, Moses wrote you this precept that you might put away your wives, but from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." The inference from this would seem to be, that the purity of attachment by which our first parents were united and their uprightness of character were so strong, that no commandment in their case was requisite. The law of love, the only perfect and eternal law, precluded every thought that was dishonourable, unjust, or selfish. But when through disobedience that law was violated, one and the same act rendered them less worthy of their God, and also of each other.

To have been of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, was once, and doubtless will again be considered—although the Jews for unbelief are now cast off—no mean distinction. Yet

even the superiority of the children of Israel appertained not to the life to come, but to the present one only. The rank which the descendants of Jacob held among the nations had reference only to the moral government of the world; St. Paul expressly declaring that the children of faith are counted for the seed. Not for any works of righteousness which they had done, any more than for any meritorious performances which the true Israel have achieved, but out of regard to faithful Abraham was it, that all their high privileges were derived. Even the Mediator of the covenant of grace attaches no undue importance to this superiority, although it was of the seed of Abraham "as concerning the flesh" that Christ came. On the contrary, upon one occasion, he hesitated not to inform them, by way of reproofing their pride and repressing their carnal propensities, that of the very stones he could raise up children to Abraham.

The object of this disquisition being to elicit truth, not to achieve a triumph for either ill-digested or unorthodox sentiments, it cannot but be admitted, that in a very remarkable passage of the Saviour's life there is at first sight an apparent contradiction to the opinion which has been advanced. The passage alluded to is that wherein our Lord, as beautifully as triumphantly, vindicates his eternal

power and Godhead, at the same time that he displays the keenest and kindest feelings of humanity. The case alluded to is that of his raising from the dead the beloved brother of Mary and Martha, as is circumstantially and pathetically related in the 11th chapter of St. John's Gospel. Judging from this mingled exemplification of divine power and benevolence, the mind is somewhat at a loss in drawing a right conclusion ; as it undoubtedly is an instance requiring great judgment and enlarged consideration, to come to a right understanding on the particular point now under investigation.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, observes,—“ We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.” And if this were true of the servants, how much more descriptive was it of their Lord and Master ! “ He who spake as never man spake,” was indeed a spectacle of such unexampled efficacy, that his beneficence has called forth, and ever will call forth, the gratitude of all good men, however it may have failed to attract others by its beauty, or to awe them by its profundity. By Christ, and by him alone, has the door of eternal life been opened, and to his bright example and pure doctrines are the hopes of a world to be directed. It was fitting, therefore, that he by whom salvation was thus exclusively

purchased, should in all things so demean himself, that through the encouraging influences of so bright a pattern, the faithfulness of his followers might be continually strengthened and sustained. As the bringer in of a perfect righteousness, it was meet that he should exhibit himself to his chosen clothed in every conceivable virtue—that the Desire of Nations should be arrayed with all the attributes of Deity, at the same time that he was embued with all the lineaments and feelings of man—sin only excepted.

Although every act of the Messiah's life clearly demonstrated his supernal and mortal connexion, yet nowhere is this twofold character of God-Man more gloriously sustained than in the text under notice. In the restoration to life of Lazarus, the whole character of the Great Eternal Son, and the son of Joseph, shines forth with condensed majesty. It is here, in the privacy of domestic friendship, where we trace the Saviour's marvellous compassion and sympathy with human grief; and where also we recognise the loftiest manifestation of his power. Upon other occasions, every unnecessary appeal to human endearment seemed swallowed up in the universality of his charity. To one or two of these expositions, pointed allusion has already been made; and in his public ministry generally, good-will to men,

not to particular classes or individuals, was his prevailing disposition. In no other light, therefore, is this passage to be regarded than as an unanswerable demonstration of almighty power and goodness, apart from all other reasonings—as one not only calculated to win the transitory affection of the two sisters of the beloved Lazarus, but by the magnitude of the power therein evinced, to command the admiration of all to whom the narrative should descend.

The only other passage to which reference shall be made as to the subject of future recognitions, is contained in the 18th chapter of St. Luke, ver. 29. “And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” Doubtless, many who never reflected seriously upon a future world, have nevertheless solemn forebodings of its reality, and are distressed beyond measure when called upon to surrender any of the things just enumerated. Yet, sooner or later, all these earthly joys must be given up, and some of them indisputably for ever. “Be not thou afraid,” says the psalmist, “when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dieth, he shall carry no-

thing away: his glory shall not descend with him." And again, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."

Passages upon passages might be multiplied to show the utter folly of inordinate attachment to earth, as well as the misunderstanding of divine things, that would disparage such as are heavenly. From the text before us, the inordinate love of all these things is even now interdicted, and more certain happiness promised, even in this life, than the possession of any of them—of themselves—can bestow; and in the world to come, life everlasting. Of what the latter consists we know but in part, and that part imperfectly—until that which the prophet Isaiah has predicted has been accomplished—"And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations." Of that portion of the promise which relates to earth, we can more accurately judge; and certainly if greater happiness be the result of giving up whatever bears the resemblance of idolatry there—as who can doubt who has implicit confidence in the words of truth?—assuredly in heaven there must be sources of delight immeasurably countervailing everything we are called upon to renounce.

Having now extracted such texts as seem most prominently to relate to the subject, a few general remarks may not be misplaced. That the Judge of all the world will do right, both on the matter of our inquiry, and on all other matters with which we are concerned, is unquestionable ; therefore it is, that weak and erring mortals ought not to set their affections on things below, but on those that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. If they considered their own interest, and knew their relationship to God, not only would they cast all their cares, but all their affections, upon him who careth for them, and loved them with such an everlasting love, that he himself became flesh and dwelt among us ! And that we might be rescued from the bondage of sin and death, finally did, what no earthly friend or brother would have undertaken, evinced his love by dying for us !

Even by the most upright of mankind, consanguinity is far oftener considered, in estimating what is due to individuals, than character. But Christ commended his love to us, in that while we were aliens he suffered death in our stead—not for the wealthy alone, but for the poor and destitute. Though the rich have many friends, and virtue for its own sake be too often despised, yet such shall not be the case for ever. Before the throne

of infinite justice and holiness, exalted virtue, however humbly connected, shall obtain regard. "Although they sold the poor for a pair of shoes," (Amos ii. 6,) yet now shall they be admitted to the society of Abraham, the friend of God, and to that of all the other patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, who ever sojourned in this vale of tears. With Moses, and Enoch, and David, and Elijah, shall they be associated—being made equal with them in intelligence, in holiness, and in every grace and glory. With far richer blessings than Jacob ever pronounced upon his offspring, shall the meanest of the spiritual Israel now be honoured—all who through the lapse of ages have done honour to their Saviour, whatever may have been their condition, their country, or their capacity. Whatever names are recorded in the book of life, all such shall be partakers of a more glorious inheritance than time could ever offer, shall participate in a felicity worthier far to be sought after than the purest affections of earth.

Short as this life is, what a change and succession of feelings do we not in that brief period experience and undergo? What a mingled cup of sweets and bitterness—the former too often partial and short-lived, the latter manifold and abiding—have we not to partake of, or to wring!

Friendships and relationships are continually disappearing or decaying, others springing up, and deriving much of their value from an untried novelty or specious affectation of unsubstantial dignity ; and more obliterations, ingrati- tudes, and wanton neglects, crowded into the narrow compass of their existence, than most men are disposed either to remember or to admit.

How false, then, the estimate they make of a world where all is calm, peaceful, and unchanging—of the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, beneficence, and joy ; who would, from the beggarly elements by which we are surrounded, endeavour to extract either consolation or hope ! Even as respects ourselves—the recipients of an Almighty Father's goodness—this view seems anything but the correct one ; but how vastly is its incorrectness enhanced, when the claims of an infinitely wise and holy God and common parent are considered and thrown into the scale ? To say nothing of such self-seeking as is implied in the recognition of kindred in heaven, interfering with the claims of the angelic throng who surround the throne, and are described as resting neither day nor night in their glorious employment ; how would such an earth-born feeling, if indulged to any extent, detract from that Almighty Father's adoration, whose

glorious attributes demand, not only the exclusive homage of all created beings, but their undivided and undistracted admiration and affection! If the eternal Word, the only Son of the Father, carried, as we have just seen he did carry, his maternal or fraternal regards to his earthly kindred no further than a sense of natural affection or earthly duty required at his hands—considering his spiritual relationship far above all mundane associations—well may Christians relinquish every earthly idol. The more especially ought they to do this, seeing how poor and imperfect is the love which this cold world has to offer, and how perfect is that which is above. If those who are but as strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and who profess at least to be seeking a better world, were to look more to the climate whither they are bound, and less to the wilderness they are travelling through, much of the disquietude about minor affairs would at once vanish.

In this world the kindly affections of friends form the very acme of bliss. Yet it is to be feared there is much of the nature of sin commingled with what, at first sight and in the estimation of the world, passes muster as the very essence of amiability. That cannot be truly amiable which rests satisfied with the creature and refers not to the Creator, from whom alone “every

good and perfect gift proceeds." No species of guilt is more justly or more universally reprobated than that of ingratitude; yet how ungrateful are we, one and all, to Him, by whom "we live, and move, and have our being!"

But whether this amiability be genuine or not, in the world to come the same necessity which prompts us thereto will have ceased to exist. Where all is in a course of perpetual change and disquietude, generation after generation springing up, the righteous and the wicked, as far as human eye can scan, indiscriminately mingled, and everything tending to sorrow and disappointment; it is not difficult to perceive the moral beauty and fitness—nay, the absolute necessity for such feelings as unite kindred together, having been planted in the human breast, and of their being fondly cherished in the heart. But when none of these disturbing causes shall remain—when all tears shall have been wiped away, and beauties of a higher order than this "not unlovely world" shall have supervened, all such feelings will have become at least comparatively unnecessary, if not altogether obsolete. When that beneficent and Almighty Father who now prepares a table for all flesh, shall become the supreme object of our worship, veneration, and love, then shall we require no other arm to repose on—no other help

to sustain our felicity. In him, and that exclusively, our chief affection will centre, and to him every earthly recollection and predilection yield.

The disparity of the two states of being, even in respect of their duration, would seem of itself an argument against any undue weight being attached to intimacies formed on earth. Like as the dulness of a country village is soon forgotten in the gaiety of a capital, or the homeliness of the cottage is overpowered in the splendour of a court; so, only in an infinitely higher degree, would even reason suggest that this world should be regarded, when compared with that which is to come.

True it is, that it is through much tribulation the kingdom of heaven is won and finally entered. Yet after all, though the life of the partakers thereof may be a scene of suffering from beginning to end, how brief is the period!—contrasted with eternity, does it amount to more than an absolute nonentity? To say nothing of the poverty of imagination which would restrict the beatitude resulting from omnipotence and omniscience to such low conceptions as mere animal natures share, or human imperfection or convenience require; how utterly unworthy of reason were the thought that could fancy, that either the feelings or pursuits of man in his infancy of being should

not be transcendently surpassed when renovated by Almighty power, and all his faculties full grown ! What a sensual mind must they possess, who can so estimate and disparage eternity !—who would borrow from time its petty materials and tinsel trappings, to emblazon an eternal and spiritual existence ; or conceive that the puerile intimacies and fugitive impressions of threescore years and ten should furnish an exemplar for never-ending ages !

Instead of accepting with thankfulness the grateful vicissitudes of day and night, so invigorating to man, and equally beneficial to everything which administers to his comfort ; were he, by the aid of some locomotive contrivance, to endeavour to controvert this appointment, and travelling with the speed of the wind, seek to elude the chariot of the sun, and envelope himself in Cimmerian darkness, what would be thought of so mad a project ? And is the case of all those who would substitute earth's profane joys for the divine happiness of heaven, one jot wiser ? Nay, is there any comparison in the scale of madness ? The parallel holds strictly true, weighing only the analogy of the two cases under a single aspect ; but when the ephemeral duration of the one scene is considered, and the immortality of the other, can it be accounted otherwise than tenfold

insanity to disparage the latter? When sempiternal life and light are offered to our acceptance, we put it away as though it were a thing which did not concern us.—“We wait for light, but behold obscurity for brightness, but we walk in darkness.” Like the man who would exclude the sun, preferring the midnight fog to the beauties of nature, with all their varied tints, well arranged contrasts, and multiplied attractions; the bulk of mankind have ever chosen darkness rather than light, and, with inexplicable infatuation, perilled their share in the glories of heaven for the chimeras of earth.

Those who circumnavigate the globe, from a simple cause, lose an apparent day in their computation. But we who are upon a journey of infinite importance, and beating about for an eternal duration—for a haven secure from every storm which universal nature can experience,—observe something like the converse of this phenomenon; since, for the accounted gain of a moment, too many make shipwreck of their souls, and barter away their eternal hopes.—As respects the present generation, already the shades of evening have imposed darkness over half the country they have travelled through, and with increased velocity (apparently at least) the eclipse is advancing. Even now the summer of one half

of the world is at its extreme height, and while these words are in the act of being written, a pestilential gloom, and moral dimness superadded, is invading whatever remains of our destined period. Religious errors, long since considered exploded, are again leaving their lurking places, and distress and ignorance palpably advancing; while, on the other hand, the whole political horizon seems beset with clouds of the most impervious and lowering aspect. Though science, with an application unequalled, has distanced the philosophy of the old world; it would yet seem that the science of morality, practically speaking, was all but in leading strings—and, consequently, the real happiness of the world as far distant as ever.

But, however this may be, soon our share in the turmoil shall have ceased. Soon, very soon, but a small segment of our prescribed circle will remain, and then if we are not saved—have not previously surveyed the charts, observed the soundings, and learned somewhat of the language of the country to which we must hereafter be transferred—our present habitation being destined to be burned—how dreadful will be our condition! Better would it have been not to have been born in a christian land, nor have known the way of righteousness, than to have refused to walk therein.

Far from our many privileges having been of the smallest advantage, they will prove our condemnation and our ruin. When once the obscurity shall be at its height, and the present race shall one and all have suffered a total eclipse, then will it be in vain to call upon the rocks, or the hills, for they too shall be removed; though impotent they would have proved had they remained. Like as the children of Israel had light in their dwellings when universal Egypt was engulfed in midnight darkness, and like as the spiritual Israel, even in this world, have a light which the unregenerate know not of,—so in one bright spot alone, after the things that are seen are dissolved, will life, light, and immortality thenceforth be found.

With such prospects, well may we sit loose to the things of time and sense, nor cherish beyond their true estimate what appertain but to a point of time, and that encumbered with griefs innumerable! It is recorded in the imperial manifesto which Heaven hath thought fit to publish, that “he who loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me:” and again, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,”—intimations, showing that, with

childlike simplicity, all our best affections ought to centre and be confided in God alone. Even the best of human feelings have not only their alloy, but, in the eye of infinite wisdom and omniscience, they are beset with infirmity; weakness preponderating over all that is seemingly excellent, and impurity and depravity all but obliterating the most meritorious of human actions.

Would that the truth warranted a fairer representation!—It is from no wish to censure, that these unpalatable views are advanced, but from a belief that to evade a conscientious inquiry, where such important issues are at stake, would be highly culpable. So far from seeking to impair the best affections of the heart, the object contemplated has been, in the most effectual way, to extend its charities, and to vindicate, at the same time, the supremacy of the Creator.

Notwithstanding that even angels' food—which manna is described to have been—was rained upon the children of Israel, and miracle after miracle was performed, assuring them of God's favour; yet their unbelief upon every new emergency preponderated; and every succeeding manifestation failed to induce them to relinquish their idolatries, or to place their confidence on his arm, who had so signally and so frequently succoured them. And so it is at the present moment with

those who in many respects are a favoured people. Though deliverances upon deliverances have been vouchsafed, and everything done to secure their gratitude and esteem, and to wean them from a too idolatrous attachment to earth ; yet pride, disbelief, rebellion, and worldlymindedness, are the only return such transcendent benefits have called forth !

CHAPTER VIII.

HAPPY, thrice happy, will they be, who may be found worthy to take their place in those resplendent mansions, where “the crystal river proceeding out of the throne of God, and the fruits of the trees that are for the healing of the nations,” shall for ever preserve their coolness and their verdure!—How do the mean pursuits of earth sink into insignificance when contrasted with immortal joy! True it is, that earth is not without its beauties, and those of a high order. As the son of David has said, everything is beautiful in its season. Yet how short, and in many instances uncertain, is that season, and how evanescent every appendage to man’s comfort, convenience, or enjoyment! No sooner do the flowers of spring arrive by gradual progression to maturity, and put forth their long-looked-for bloom, than they begin to change, to wither, and to die. And though others in quick

succession, as beautiful as profuse, perpetuate the charm, yet each and all scarce wait a second interview, then sink for ever from the view. Such is the character of flowers, those beauteous emblems of loveliness, and such the history of animated nature through all her chain of being. From infancy to manhood, from manhood to old age, man never abideth in one stay; his spirits, his pursuits, and his hopes, being as various as the years he numbers. Turmoil and strife, incessant change and never-ending decay, constitute the whole narrative of mundane affairs—no matter how they may be classified by philosophers, or in what manner they may be distinguished for precedence. But not so will it be in the resplendent clime which lieth beyond the grave. There everything will present the very antipodes to all this; an eternal spring, pouring from her lap amaranthine buds and flowers innumerable—and joy and gladness flowing on as a river, without interruption or decay.

Yet let no one deceive himself; God is a regarder of justice, as well as a dispenser of mercy. Although he willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to his glory; yet “he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.” He himself hath declared, that many in the day of final retribution, “when

the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him," "and before him shall be gathered all nations," will exclaim,—“ Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ?” To whom, notwithstanding, the Judge shall address these appalling words, “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” In that day, we are told, numbers will call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on them, to hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,” but who shall call in vain—for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ? In proportion to the humility and long-suffering, with such wondrous equanimity and patience, displayed at Christ’s first coming—when he appeared exclusively in the character of a Saviour—will be the terrible aspect and determinate justice of his second advent, when he shall appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. How different, at that tremendous moment when he shall appear in the character of an Almighty Judge, will he be regarded, to what he was when erst his presence was despised, and his mercies set at naught ! How dissimilar,

too, the estimation in which all external objects will be held at that dread hour to what they now are !— When the whole frame-work of the world is dissolving, then shall the conscience of every man vindicate the righteousness of an Almighty God. Though long stifled or disregarded, at length shall that still small voice, the whisper of a Deity, speak to the troubled soul in tones of thunder. Not all the reverberations of a flaming world shall cause such terror to the guilty soul as shall that monitor, emancipated from all that erewhile enthralled and held it mute. Arrayed in majesty and strength, now shall the countenance of the incarnate Son of the Father carry dismay into every unregenerate heart; overwhelming with deepest anguish and consternation not only those who were accessory to his cruel mockings and death, but all who have despised his love in every succeeding age. With a congregated world before them, the earth and heavens in flames, and the Lamb attended by ten thousand of his saints, where shall the despisers of his person and of his doctrines appear ?

We dwell not, however, upon this harrowing subject, but turn to those, who, like their Judge in the days of his flesh, have through much tribulation won for themselves, or rather the grace of God hath enabled them to win, a name which

no man taketh from them. Amid the scenes passing around at that decisive hour, it is scarcely possible to conceive but that some disquietude, some holy fear, should possess their souls. Yet He, who, for the elect's sake, shortened the period of suffering upon earth immediately preceding the second advent of Messiah, can assure all and each, at that trying epoch, of their acceptance and ultimate safety. Nay, who dare presume to say whether or no, before that great day of reckoning, such assurance may not have been given? What favours this supposition is the remarkable declaration made by our Saviour, in speaking of the last judgment, where he says,—“When the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” What St. Paul also writes to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. vi. 2.) goes to confirm this view, when he asks, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” and again, immediately afterwards, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” Conscience, that will join in condemnation of the sinner, will not forsake the righteous; but, amid the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds, will yield the latter confidence. To that pleader for almighty justice, and never-intermitting interpreter

of all that was dubious in God's providence, he ever listened with attention, and now that divine arbiter, with ample manifestations, shall support each candidate for heaven. Impartially just, like him who formed it, conscience will either ratify man's doom, or second the award establishing his eternal glorification.

What time the final judgment may occupy, or how it will be conducted, save as to essentials, it were idle, or worse, in man to inquire. But, on its completion, to the once-despised but now honoured elect shall the happy greeting be vouchsafed, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ! for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." On the other hand, the negation of all these charitable dispositions having been charged upon all others who come not up to this standard, the same Scripture adds,—“and these shall go away into everlasting fire, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Having such blessed promises, happy shall we be, if, as well as knowing them, we also do all that is required to obtain their fulfilment. It is not a speculative knowledge of good, but a practical

abandonment of evil, that will save any one. A cheerful obedience to God's commands, and a willingness to have him to reign over us, are the requisites which can alone insure certain peace and victory. "Blessed," it is written, "is he that overcometh, and who shall be thought worthy to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith—not the faith that a formal assent to the truths of Scripture supposes, but one that engrafts thereon a living zeal for the honour of Christ, the promotion of his glory, and the happiness of the whole human race.

When death shall have barred every avenue to hope, it ought to be remembered, that our destiny, let the last sun burst upon the world when it may, will be for ever sealed. "As the tree falleth, so shall it lie." "There is no repentance in the grave, whither we are all hastening," neither work or device.—"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!"

Let us walk, then, honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but, contrariwise, let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. And so in due time we shall

reap if we faint not. Let us ever remember the warning given by him who shall be our future Judge, "that at such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." Let it be ours to watch unto prayer, so that that day take us not un-awares; to keep the heart with all diligence, since out of it are the issues of life; and daily to strive to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

So alone that all-important day which "shall come as a snare upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth," may be met with becoming fortitude and joy. Then, although "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up;" this utter destruction and overthrow of all that proud man had erewhile trusted in and valued, shall not have power to affright us. Amid the convulsion of all visible objects, those who have departed the present life in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection, shall not be greatly moved. If the Lord has been our earthly portion and strength, he assuredly will not forsake us in that dread hour—but be our shield, and exceeding great reward. The trump of the archangel, which shall arouse myriads to shame and everlasting contempt, will be the

welcome herald to the elect, of their admission to everlasting mansions, "where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore." The winged ministers of God's vengeance, amid all the terrors they shall inflict, shall but agitate, not scathe, the little flock destined to crop the flowery meads of heaven. To them, the countenance of the good Shepherd will present a subdued radiance, although to his opponents it shall appear with unutterable wrath and inexorable vengeance.

Let all such, then, as have tasted that the Lord is gracious—have given themselves in charge to the great Shepherd of Israel, aspire to an inheritance not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. May they who have laid hold of the covenant of grace, hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering; knowing that he is faithful who hath promised, who also will do it. Let them look exclusively to the blood of sprinkling, and not to that blood which, as in the case of Abel, oftentimes crieth for vengeance. Seeing that this life is but a vapour, or as a dream when one awaketh; let all such use this world without abusing it, or without attaching to it an importance of which it is unworthy. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Seeing that

our present probationary state is but the puling infancy, or indistinct dawn of a brighter day, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with diligence the race that is set before us.

Inasmuch as all we have already seen is temporal, and what is unseen is eternal, let us bear this distinction continually in mind. Not only does the world itself, and the fashion thereof, pass away, but it is even questionable whether the recollection of it may not be dissolved—earthly ties of all kinds being destined to be broken up, and feelings essentially different communicated. And if it should be so—is there anything either to be afraid of or to regret? With God for our refuge, what else can we need? Whether we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, or in whatever circumstances we may be placed, we need fear no evil. He will be with us, with whom is power, and dominion; and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Should the effect of this work be that of leading any one to contemplate more seriously than he has done the realities of a future world, or to prize more lightly than heretofore the perishing baubles of earth, it will not have been written in vain. Or should it but induce any one to search the Scriptures, to see whether a just representation

of heaven's joys has herein been made, his utmost desires will be gratified.

The fool alone hath said in his heart, there is no God; and none but they whose hearts are pre-engaged, or minds pre-occupied, can possibly reject the Scriptures of divine truth, which are alone able to make wise unto salvation. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they who do thereafter—the praise of it endureth for ever. To inconsideration, in too many instances, is it owing, that God's offered mercy is rejected, the atonement itself undervalued, and the entreaties of the Holy Spirit unlistened to. Although wisdom uttereth her voice in the streets, and crieth in the chief place of concourse, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"—Though the prophet, in the fervency of inspired zeal, cry, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price!"—Or, although "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take of the water freely!"—Though all these gracious overtures be made, yet, as is related in the parable

of a certain man who made a great supper and bade many, the bulk of mankind are noways disposed to avail themselves of the boon. On the contrary, they are predisposed to excuse themselves upon the slightest worldly pretext offering itself to their attention ! Like the guests invited to the supper in question, the first pleads his having bought a piece of ground, and therefore he must needs go and see it ; another has bought five yoke of oxen, and must prove them ; a third has married a wife, and therefore cannot come. These are the flimsy excuses which men urge in bar of that consideration of divine things, which is their highest privilege to have offered to them. Upon such weak pretences, and in subserviency to the force of long-established habit, do they thus barter away their everlasting inheritance ; from day to day deferring that effort which is hourly becoming more difficult to make, and placing in the utmost peril the only hope of happiness, real and substantial, which they can enjoy here or hereafter.

In relation to the passage just mentioned, it may be observed that both nations and individuals have their besetting sins, by which they are drawn aside from every contemplation but that of their own favourite pursuit. As respects individuals, the experience of almost every man must have taught him the sad reality of such a predisposition

to vice in some beloved form ; and not less true is the assertion when communities are surveyed. Riches are described in the book of life as the root of all evil, and doubtless they have been such in every period of the world ; although at no era was the love of wealth, for its own sake, so prevalent as at present. The idol of the present age is unquestionably mammon—the Moloch, at whose shrine, not only the cardinal virtues are offered up, but the very decencies of life disregarded and overlooked. It was the consolatory and magnanimous exclamation of a warrior after a defeat, that he had lost every thing but his honour ; but how little would it tell in favour of any man at the present time, if the only qualifying exculpation that could be made under adversity was, that he had forfeited neither his honour nor honesty ! Such is the height to which the inordinate veneration of wealth has been carried, that, to all practical purposes, public opinion would seem to stigmatise poverty as a crime, and to have degraded that once stern virtue of our ancestors, common honesty, into a quality too contemptible for its notice.

Drunkenness may be mentioned as another of our national failings—one that for ages has been preying, to a certain extent, upon her resources and comforts, but which, now that there are other undermining influences in operation,

threatens to sap the very foundations of public order. When the poor could better afford to indulge in this destructive habit, and their bodily strength was better prepared to throw off the deleterious effects arising therefrom, the case was bad enough ; but when a diseased competition, and that to an enormous and unnatural extent, has sprung up in the market of labour, the effects of such dreadful intemperance are doubly unpropitious.

Yes, Mammón and Bacchus—these are the twin idols of Britain, at whose shrine all the homely and honest virtues of our ancestors are sacrificed. Next to the worship of the God of their fathers, their delight was in the observance of the golden rule of doing as they would be done unto. But can selfishness lay claim to any such excellence ? Can the man who is looking forward to his dying a “millionaire,” afford to act on so lofty a principle ?

It is in vain to refer to our public charities, as is too often done, so long as both innocence and virtue are condemned to wither in the shade, and to furnish the very means by which they are supported. To the superficial observer, all may appear as fair and as laudable as doubtless much of the conscientious support tendered to those charitable institutions deserves to be considered ; but

looking at the affair in a great national point of view, it must not be disguised that there is a deep under-current of feeling, both as respects much of the motives, and also in regard to the necessity for such charities, which has never yet been fully dragged to light.

Far be it from us to disparage, in the slightest degree, any of the charitable institutions of Britain. So far is this foreign to our intention, that all our desire is, that there should be less occasion for them, and that whatever of good was in the spirit which projected them, may be increased a hundredfold. Taken by themselves, they are institutions such as the world never before witnessed. Still the fact is undeniable, being evidenced in a thousand ways, that owing to the grasping spirit of the times, seldom have the poor, all things considered, been so neglected and forgotten. The solemn injunction against covetousness, so forcibly put by the prophet, it is to be feared, has been wholly disregarded. "Woe unto them," he writes, "that join house to house; that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" And again, "Behold the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the

ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." It must not be supposed that the application of this passage is to be regarded in a restricted sense. It is to be feared that the mistress of the commerce of the world has at least as much to answer for in the withholding of wages from the poor subjected to her control, as that of her elder sister. It were a flight of philosophy out of place here to apportion the degree of guilt which truth would assign to each ; but let agriculture and commerce be assured, that liberality, notwithstanding all the professions of the age, is by no means the characteristic of either.

As respects the case of the drunkards to whom allusion has been made, if no reasoning as to their own deteriorated condition, no national derangement contingent thereon, no bodily want or suffering, or no degradation of the mind, have power to restrain them in their headlong career, at least let them tremble for its future consequences. Let them be well assured that "the night is far spent, the day is at hand ; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." "Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy."

The prevalence of so much wickedness would seem to leave no doubt that practical infidelity is

the root from whence so abundant a harvest has proceeded. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? How then can such wide pervading national depravity be accounted for, but upon the broad ground, that as a nation we have cast off the fear of heaven. "And shall I not judge for these things, saith the Lord; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" In the eyes of Omniscience, how small is the difference between those who openly deny the existence of a God, and they who, while professing a belief therein, in works deny him! With eyes riveted on the earth, it is to be feared that nothing short of some great revolution will arouse thousands to a sense of their position in respect to their Maker, themselves, and their fellow-men; and that such a revolution may come sooner than is generally expected, many things conspire to foretell.

May both the classes thus hastily glanced at remember from whence they have fallen, and so be instrumental in averting from Britain's favoured soil the inflictions with which she is threatened! Should the mandate of Heaven already have gone forth, and the destroying angel have received his commission, all, we know, will be well with the righteous, come what may upon the

ungodly. But it may be otherwise. Like as "the cities of the plain" had been saved, had but ten righteous persons been found therein, it may be that the Great Arbiter of human destiny may see fit to spare a guilty land, for the sake of the upright that are therein.

It is high time, seeing the evils by which this country is beset, that all should seek to the Rock from whence they were hewn—should honour his holy name, and reverence his word. May all no longer despise the treasures of the latter, but be well assured that the intrinsic truth and beauty displayed therein are such as no logician can ever set aside, or caviller gainsay. In the sublimity of its language, the tone of its reasoning, and profundity of its ethics, no book is comparable to the Bible. There may be texts at first sight apparently contradictory, there may be others which do not assimilate with the notions of every reader who cursorily peruses that sacred volume; but, taken as a whole, it contains a more perfect code of wisdom than all other books put together. It is a "text-book" too, be it remembered, not for this or that age or country, but for the world and for all ages. He who knew the heart of man intimately, and has declared it to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,

has in that inspired volume, with inimitable aptitude, provided a cure for every wound, a panacea for every possible disease.

With such matchless intrinsic attractions, strong must its evidence be against an impenitent world, when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and the day of probation shall have fled for ever. Why should the Bible be otherwise than as we find it, full of beauty, excellence, and knowledge, seeing that the Governor of the universe was its Author? "He that formed the eye, shall he not see; he that made the ear, shall he not hear?" "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding?" "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance! Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing!" "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span; and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" Is it not "He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out to dwell in?"—"The Lord is

in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him."—Before a presence so exalted, how ought everything, let their intellectual capacities be what they may, both in heaven and earth, to bow !

Even the best of men have unceasing cause to be dissatisfied with their attainments in grace, and to deplore the coldness and formality which commingle with their very best actions—as well as to weep over the pharisaical deportment which but too extensively characterises the present age. Broad as may be the external contrast between the professions of the present and a former age, even charity, that hopeth all things, can scarcely reconcile it to herself not to doubt that the spirituality and self-denying earnestness of an earlier period are well-nigh departed. At the present time, to profess to be religious, in the usual acceptance of the word, is no discredit to a man, even with the world. Shorn of its vitality, Religion has become even fashionable, and scripture phrases, it is to be feared, in too many instances have degenerated into mere household words. That spiritual form of sound doctrine which ought to have been a savour of life unto life, it is much to be feared, has been perverted into a savour of death unto death.

“Salt is good ; but if the salt have lost its

savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be trodden under foot of men." How apposite the illustration to a church destitute of spirituality, and unworthy of being held in estimation by mankind! It is much to be feared, that what St. John was commissioned to write concerning the church of the Laodiceans is equally applicable to the Church of England—at least to thousands who profess to belong to that truly apostolic hierarchy:—"And unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write; These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and naked."

May all those who are trusting in uncertain riches, or grovelling in sensuality, no longer be deceived by the lying vanities of this life, but make choice of that good part which shall never be taken away! To-day, while it is called to-day, let them lift up their "eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that

bringeth out their host by number." Let them direct their thoughts to the contemplation of those eternal glories, which shall remain fixed and secure when that which is written shall have been accomplished.—"And the sea gave up the dead which was in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them, and they were judged according to their works." "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Before that day overtake them, let all into whose hands this little volume shall fall, duly weigh the all-important subject—assured that there is a reward for the righteous; verily, there is a God that judgeth the earth. Let them reflect upon "the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

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